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ABSTRACT

This professional development package is designed to assist General Educational Development (GED) instructors in developing teaching skills to help them prepare students for the written essay part of the new GED exam. An introduction discusses some research and theory that support collaborative teaching situations that most efficiently and effectively communicate the required thinking/writing skills. It also describes a multistage model of instruction (prewriting, outlining, writing, revising, and editing). Some general guidelines for conducting the writing inservice program are provided. The facilitator's overview and guide provides materials for nine sections: introduction, organizing written materials, GED test criteria, understanding the GED writing sample, the group process, freewriting, sharing freewriting, organizing ideas, and moving from ideas to form. Use of a related videotape in the inservice sessions is discussed. Some or all of these components are given for each section: rationale, synopsis, objective, resources, follow-up, and activity. The next section of this package contains reproducible resources for inservice participants, including writing topics, writing sample test, student assignment sheet, student freewriting worksheet, readings to explore organizational patterns, and additional sources for professional development. A glossary and tips for teaching writing are also provided. (YLB)

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PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Introducing Writing to GED/ABE Students

For use with the staff development videotape: Introducing Writing into the GED Classroom. Available through the UNM 310 Project.

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EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF THINKING AND WRITING SKILLS

The GED tests to be introduced in 1988 will include a new element: a written essay. This addition reflects a recommendation made by the Language Arts panel of the GED Tests Specifications Committee that writing skills be measured directly as well as indirectly. As a result, when our GED students take the new writing skills test, they will be given a single topic which asks them to present an opinion or an explanation on a subject about which adults are expected to have some general knowledge. Introducing writing into the GED classroom will require some special skills of GED instructors because of the analytical nature of the topic. Instructors will need:

1) An understanding of the kind of topic that students will be writing on and the ability to create similar topics for preparing students.

2) A working knowledge of the evaluation criteria, so classroom writing will be evaluated according to test criteria: purpose, structure, specific support, and appropriate grammar, usage, and punctuation.

3) An ability to identify and develop individual and group activities that will help students develop these skills.

The purpose of this professional development package is to assist GED instructors in developing teaching skills which will help them prepare students for the written essay part of the new GED exam. Research and educators' experiences indicate that the thinking/writing skills required are most efficiently and effectively communicated through collaborative learning situations where dialogue or discussion expose individuals to different ways of looking at topics. The accompanying video provides an opportunity to observe other GED instructors and tutors working with this process. In this brief introduction, some of the research and theory which support this approach will be discussed.

Instructors need to understand the type of topic that students will be given. The writer must be able to use experiences and facts and develop ideas. The Language Arts panel of the GED Test Specification Committee has suggested that this writing sample require the writer to "take a position and defend it with appropriate evidence, detail, and argumental strategies." Instructors need to understand the difference between writing which describes experiences and writing which uses experience and information to generate ideas. A major transition for many students when they enter school and work situations is the need to work with information in new ways. Andrea Lundsford's research emphasizes the difficulty many inexperienced writers have when information must be organized according to ideas or concepts.

Detailed information on the grading of the GED writing sample is provided in the GED Manual. Instructors need to have a thorough understanding of the following evaluation criteria which will be used to evaluate student essays: 1) clear purpose or main idea, 2) evidence

of an organizational plan, 3) sufficient support for main idea, 4) appropriate mechanics such as sentence structure, grammar, usage, and punctuation. Developing instructional strategies that address all of the critieria is important. For this reason, the approach presented in this professional development package is built on an analysis of these criteria in order to understand the skills which instructors must develop so students' writing will meet these criteria.

Research

The teaching of writing has received considerable attention in recent years, and research has expanded our understanding of what writing involves by analyzing the writing process. Studying what is involved when an individual creates expository writing helps educators understand the particular skills which need to be developed. A problem of writing instruction in the past has been assumptions on the part of teachers. Directions such as "write an outline" or "consider the reader" are based on assumptions that students have had certain experiences. In the first example, the student must have had experience organizing ideas according to a "standard" school or work-based logic. Andrea Lundsford's research explores the complexity of concept formation required to organize information according to ideas rather than experiences. Some research has suggested that this process is also affected by family and cultural issues (Roueche). In the second example, the student must have had experience expressing ideas in a formal situation, one that may be different than situations with friends and family. School writing involves communication with a new audience for many students. By understanding the criteria and analyzing the process, instructors can understand more about the basic skills involved in expository writing.

Researchers such as Linda Flower, John Hayes, and Sondra Perl have described the difficulty of the writer who must simultaneously pay attention to several concerns. The writer is translating into written form ideas which may not have been previously expressed. Individuals in daily situations may never have presented and explained ideas in the manner that school and work situations demand. At the same time, the writer must consider the reader and whether the ideas are explained clearly, organized, and supported with sufficient information. At the same time, the mechanics of written language such as sentence and paragraph structure, punctuation and more formal grammar and usage demand attention. Research indicates that experienced writers become adept at shifting among these varied concerns, and experienced writers are aware that writing goes through several drafts before being completed. Flower and Hayes' research describes experienced writers' ability to put aside concern with mechanics in the early stages of the process and instead focus idea level concerns. On the other hand, Sondra Perl's research indicates that less experienced writers tend to be overly concerned with the mechanics of grammar, spelling, and punctuation rather than focusing attention on the main idea, supporting details, and organization. Thus, writers are constantly juggling the concerns of communication and presentation of ideas with the mechanics of the process.

The Stage Model

With awareness of the multiple constraints put on the writer, instructors in recent years have encouraged a multistage method of instruction using the stages of prewriting, outlining, writing, revising, and editing. This approach is helpful in isolating particular aspects of the process and allowing less experienced writers to focus on one aspect of the process at a time. For example, freewriting, is a prewriting technique that encourages the writer to continue writing for a period of time. The writer is told not to be concerned with details of punctuation, spelling or grammar but to let the ideas flow. Later, the writer reflects individually or with a group on the freewriting and identifies the ideas and organizes them into a more formal piece of writing. At another stage, the writing is revised and edited; each time the writer works with another aspect of the process. Thus, the writer can separate and concentrate on particular concerns in the same way an athlete or a musician strengthens a particular skill before putting it all together.

Instructors using the stage model need to keep in mind that these stages are not necessarily isolated and linear. Most writing is recursive, and the writer moves back and forth among different activities. A student may need to outline before he does a focused freewrite, or he may outline after he has done the second or third draft. Writing is a very individual process, and students must learn what works best for them. Also, students preparing for the GED Test will need practice working in a time constraint where there is no time for multiple drafts. Instructors need to use aspects of the stage model to strengthen particular skills rather than as a rigid model of the writing process.

Also, while working with a stage model helps student writers focus on particular aspects of the process, instructors need to understand the particular skills involved in each stage. Using written language is a learned skill, and instructors should not assume that particular aspects of the process are innate. Some of the skills involved in writing may be the result of particular social experiences. Thus, certain students may need experiences which develop these skills. Some of the following skills contribute to the writing process: recall of experiences and information, generation of ideas, seeing the relationships among ideas and information, using these relationships to organize writing, understanding the difference between general and specific, and knowing and applying concepts of grammar, usage, and punctuation. By understanding that these skills may need to be specifically taught, instructors can develop strategies that develop all the necessary skills.

Skills that contribute to writing

Recall of experiences and information

In expository prose, the writer uses personal experiences and information to create a purpose or main idea in the writing and to support ideas. Inexperienced writers under the presssure of the writing siutation may not recall associated experiences and

information. A variety of techniques strengthen skills of recall and association: group discussion, brainstorming, freewriting, and clustering (a technique of diagramming word associations).

Generation of ideas

In expository prose, the writer must put together experiences and information in order to create ideas and express opinions. The generation of ideas is considered a high-level thinking skill and is a creative process in every instance. Skill in generating ideas is developed through exposure to ideas, through personal reflection, and through practice expressing and listening to others' ideas. Dialogue between individuals and interaction among individuals in groups discussions are situations where students gain experience observing the thinking processes of others and reacting to the ideas of others. Instructors need to guide discussion to develop participants' skills at using experiences and information to generate ideas.

Understanding the relationship of ideas

In expository prose, the writer must organize ideas and information in a systematic manner that may be very different from conversational modes of communication. This organization involves seeing the relationships among ideas and information. Experience with methods of organization such as comparison/contrast, cause and effect, classification, and argumentation keep students in working with information. The ability to see the relationships among ideas and information is developed through reading and practice in identifying and discussing these relationships.

Awareness of the reader

In expository, prose, the writer needs to be aware of the reader in order to clearly communicate ideas and information. Because families and communities develop very unique ways of communicating, individuals who may be new to school situations need explicit explanation and experiences to develop awareness of what is expected when communicating in the formal situation of school or work. Researchers have noted that even seemingly mechanical problems such as vague pronoun reference are a result of the writer assuming the reader knows to whom or what the writer is referring. These assumptions are a part of communication within a community where many experiences are shared. Thus, less experienced writers may need to learn what needs to be stated and what is understood. Reading contributes to the writer's sense of what is expected. Also discussion about readings and about each other's writing provides an opportunity to develop awareness of how others react to writing and makes students aware of the communication aspect of writing. If writing is only focused on as an individual activity, students may not experience it as a process of communication.

Revision and editing skills

In expository prose, revision and editing are basic to achieving the goals of good writing. Experienced writers are more aware of the choices they are making on the word level as well as on the organizational level. Because spoken language does not provide the same opportunity to revise that written language does, the process of revising and editing language is new to less experienced writers. Group

discussion centered on an article or a student essay provides an opportunity for students to appreciate the many possibilities. Also, in situations where group writing is done, less experienced writers can observe writers questioning word choice, reflecting on the order of sentences in a paragraph, and revising what has already been written. Research (Perl) shows that less experienced writers are not as aware of their choices, and the modeling of this decision-making aspect of the process provides a valuable experience.

These are just a few of the skills which contribute to the development of good writing. Instructors need to be careful about assumptions related to writing and continually understand the underlying skills involved in the process.

In conclusion

The thinking/writing skills required in the new GED test may be most efficiently and effectively communicated through collaborative learning situations where dialogue between instructor and student or discussion in groups expose individuals to different ways of looking at topics. The purpose of this professional development package is to model strategies for instructors, to provide a vehicle for teachers to experience the group process as they develop skills, and to offer a variety of resource materials that will facilitate the introduction of writing into the GED classroom.

QUALITIES OF GOOD WRITING	GOOD WRITERS MUST:	WRITING INSTRUCTORS SHOULD:
Clear purpose or main idea	Recall experiences and information	Create a climate where individuals are comfortable sharing ideas and reacting to the ideas of others
Specific examples and sufficient support for main ideas	Generate ideas Understand the difference between general and specific ideas	Use questioning techniques to encourage recall and generate ideas Develop students' understanding of the relationship of ideas
Evidence of an organizational plan	See relationships among ideas and information and Use these relationships to organize writing	Guide discussions of articles and student papers Model the writing process, articulating the many possibilities and revisions
Appropriate mechanics: grammar, punctuation, and usage	Know and apply rules of grammar, usage, and punctuation	Develop students' understanding of standard written English Emphasize each of the qualities of Good Writing

FACILITATING THE WRITING IN-SERVICE

General Guidelines:

Tasks of the Trainer: (Schindler and Chastain/Primer For Trainers)

Task 1: To Create and Maintain a Learning Environment

Plan for a conducive physical environment. Develop the desired "mind-set"--a readiness to learn--by involving the participants, clarifying purposes, establishing the schedule, and setting the tone for positive accomplishment.

Task 2: To Manage the Continuity Line

Disruptions are caused by coffeebreaks, moving from large to small group activities, different individual pace and agendas--and the inevitable logistic mishaps. The trainer must manage to keep the flow of information and activity purposeful and continuous--despite these difficulties.

Task 3: To Present Information

Vary activities and include visual aids to make the presentation most effective. High participation is important in achieving specific workshop goals.

Task 4: To Process Information

The single most important contribution is processing the contributions of participants and integrating them into the workshop content. Select, clarify, and direct input to help participants acquire new insights and information.

Task 5: To Direct and Monitor Activities

Give clear instructions, verify understanding of them by asking for feedback, and monitor small group activities to correct or refocus group direction.

Task 6: To Manage Individual Participation

An understanding of group dynamics and the ability to recognize a problem, analyze the cause and take corrective action can keep the group interacting positively.

Specifics:

Before the in-service:

(1) Review the videotape and handbook to make sure you have the steps and objectives clearly in mind.

(2) Xerox the resource material in the handbook for each participant. Include the introductory article--"Effective Teaching of Writing and Thinking Skills",too!

(3) Arrange for the other materials you will need: chalkboard space, chalk, erasers, writing paper, VCR (1/2 inch) and TV monitor.

(4) Think about participants' affective needs. Can you provide coffee and doughnuts, schedule a pot-luck lunch for that day, meet in a comfortable, relaxed setting, build-in break times, or convey a feeling of concern in other ways?

During the in-service:

(1) Be sure the purpose and objectives of the workshop are clear to all.

(2) Encourage participation by each member of the group: rotate recording tasks, direct questions to all members, etc.

(3) Be enthusiastic about the group process and supportive of individual contributions.

(4) Allow adequate time (Be generous!) for the "discovery" process. Don't rush. Great things can result from group interaction.

(5) Remember you are facilitating--it's their show.

After the in-service:

(1) Have some follow-up communication ready--a newspaper article or magazine story that should lead to good discussion or one of the readings from the handbook--to send to workshop participants. Include the 4-Step Review sheet as a reminder.

(2) Schedule time for sharing experiences with the process at a future staff meeting.

(3) Ask to be invited to an instructor's group writing session; describe the experience in your newsletter or a memo.

Possible In-service Formats:

A. Full-day session: Follow a schedule similar to the in-service agenda used in your training, but delete some of the initial theory and begin with the videotape. Include the optional activity in Section 3. Wrap up with a discussion of the barriers to group work in current ABE setting and how to plan around them.

B. Two half-day sessions:

Day 1: Videotape sections 1-5: Background including optional activity described in Section 3. Stress new approach of GED and teaching writing via modeling activities.

Day 2: Videotape sections 6-9: Work through the 4 steps of the writing process described on the tape. Have a good discussion session at the end on ways to accomodate group activities in the ABE setting--consider barriers and how to plan around them.

C. Several 2 hour sessions (mornings, afternoons, Saturdays)

Day 1: Videotape sections 1-3: GED Writing Sample background. Include optional activity in Section 3, so teachers have a clear idea of the requirements of the GED Writing Sample.

Day 2: Videotape sections 4-6: Work up a good list of experience and idea topics. If time, choose some of the best and write up as a "test" or classroom practice sheet following the sample in the handbook. View section 5 on group work and discuss their feelings about the process they are experiencing. Finish section 6 and allow time in the group for freewriting. Collect their freewritings to use in next session.

Day 3: Videotape sections 7-9: Distribute freewritings from last session. Follow tape through sharing, organizing, and writing. Discuss barriers to group work in ABE settings and how to plan around them.

Four-Step Review of the Freewriting Process:

FREEWRITING:

Step One: This is to help students focus on a given topic and pull the information they have on that topic to mind. After the group identifies the topic they will write on, they are given 10-15 minutes to do nothing but write on that topic. No attention is given to the form or correctness of the writing...only getting as many ideas on paper as possible.

SHARING FREEWRITING:

Step Two: Individuals volunteer to read the freewriting they have just done. Remember to have someone record the ideas from the freewriting on the board or a tablet. After each freewriting the group responds by suggesting good ideas for writing that they heard in the paper. The teacher also makes comments about relationships between some of the ideas in the freewriting, the tone of the paper, and other interesting points in the writing.

ORGANIZING IDEAS:

Step Three: There are several good models or patterns of organization: compare-contrast, cause-effect, or classification are commonly used. During this step the group works to identify a model that fits the ideas they want to include in the final paper, puts the ideas together accordingly, and arranges details and examples around the main points.

MOVING FROM IDEAS TO WRITING:

Step Four: The group works on writing a good topic sentence that includes the key words from the freewriting and indicates the direction the paper will move in: What point of view does the paper present on the topic?

. Use the essay form to plan the rest of the paper:

. Introduction paragraph, body of the paper, and conclusion.

FACILITATORS OVERVIEW AND GUIDE

Section 1: Introduction

(Time/1:15)

RATIONALE

Instructors need to know the GED Writing Sample will necessitate changes in teaching strategies.

SYNOPSIS

Background information on the nature of the GED Writing Sample. Overview of the needs teachers will have as they prepare students for the Writing Sample:

(1) Need to understand the GED criteria to accurately diagnose writing problems and plan instruction

(2) Need to be able to generate practice topics for classroom use

(3) Need to develop effective strategies for writing instruction

OBJECTIVE

Instructors will be aware that GED test changes will require changes in their teaching.

Section 2: Organizing Written Materials (Time/1:10)

RATIONALE

Instructors need to prepare program forms and instructional materials before introducing writing instruction.

SYNOPSIS

Suggests organizing program maintenance files to provide easy access for instructors: writing sample test questions, student assignment sheets, instructional aides, etc. Presents newspaper, magazines and other sources as good options to make instruction timely and relevant.

OBJECTIVES

1. Instructors will be aware of need for program maintenance forms.

2. Instructors will recognize that a wide variety of materials are useful in writing instruction.

RESOURCES

* Sample of writing sample test (handbook)
* Monitoring student writing (handbook)
* Student assignment sheet (handbook)

Section 3: GED Test Criteria

(Time/1:05)

RATIONALE

Instructors need to be aware of the criteria used to grade the writing sample to better prepare their students.

SYNOPSIS

Introduces GED Preview Book prepared to acquaint teachers with the GED test criteria (purpose, structure, and usage) and the holistic scoring process. Suggests group activity to become familiar with these elements through samples of student writing.

OBJECTIVE

Instructors will identify the Preview Book as a good source of information about the writing sample.

RESOURCES

* The 1988 Tests of General Educational Development: A Preview (Handbook)

ACTIVITY

(Optional)
This activity may be scheduled for in-service times convenient to your group. However, a discussion of the writing samples included in the GED Preview Book will be very beneficial to instructors.

Steps:

1. Group reads the sections on the writing sample overview (pg. 15-16) and GED scoring guide (pg. 35, 38-39).
2. Individuals read the first essay (pg. 17) and assign a grade.
3. Group discusses grading rationale they used.
4. Leader reads the actual grade and comments given (pg. 36-37).
5. Follow same procedure with the other essays (pg. 19-33).

Section 4: Understanding the GED Writing Sample Topic (Time/10:00)

RATIONALE

Instructors need to use idea (analytical) topics for diagnosis and instruction so their students will be prepared for the analytical topics used in the GED Writing Sample.

SYNOPSIS

Discusses a representative writing sample topic to help teachers become aware of the scope of the topics used and how to make it easier for students to do this kind of writing. Explores the difference between:

experience topics --who, what, when, where (describing)
idea topics --why, how (explaining)

Group members suggest topics and classify them, sharing ideas about these differences. Shows how the topic itself is important in guiding the thinking process.

OBJECTIVES

1. Instructors will understand the difference between "experience" and "idea" topics.

2. Instructors will be able to generate both types of topics.

3. Instructors will understand the importance of using "idea" topics to prepare students for the GED.

RESOURCES

* Review page on writing topics (handbook)

FOLLOW-UP

Questions to facilitate discussion (after tape-before group work):

1. What are the 2 types of topics identified? (experience and idea)

2. Explain each. (EXPERIENCE is easier--based on real happening with built-in structure or sequence. Answers who, what, when, where. Describes. IDEA involves analytical thinking. Harder. Answers why-how. Explains.)

3. What are some reasons for writing topics connected to student's experience? (Feel they have something to say; can bridge from that to larger world; makes them more relaxed.)

4. What are some other points to remember when writing topics? (Local issues; expand perspective to world view; need some of both kinds to practice.)

5. Why is it important to use "idea" topics in instruction? (GED question will be that type. Helps students develop critical thinking skills. Move from descriptive writing to analytical writing.)

ACTIVITY

Steps:

1. Allow 5 minutes for each group member to write 1 experience topic and 1 idea topic.
2. Share topics and clarify them (record on board and paper for future).
3. Discuss and choose one to write on.
4. Start tape.

Section 5: The Group Process

(Time/3:00)

RATIONALE

Instructors need to understand the value of group instruction in writing: seeing the process modeled, sharing learning with peers, and experiencing other points of view.

SYNOPSIS

Group members share experiences and insights on the value of working with others.

OBJECTIVES

1. Instructors will be exposed to the group process as an instructional strategy.

2. Instructors will be more aware of group dynamics as they participate in the rest of the workshop activities.

Section 6: Freewriting

(Time/6:00)

RATIONALE

Instructors need to be able to use freewriting as an instructional strategy.

SYNOPSIS

Group members discuss the value they have found in freewriting:

(1) helping students focus
(2) generating ideas
(3) lowering anxiety about writing
(4) enhancing spontaneity

The steps in the freewriting process are modeled. First the group identifies a topic. Then the topic is discussed to get ideas moving (alternative plan: discussion is omitted to get more individual perspectives). Finally, individuals freewrite for 10-15 minutes on the topic.

OBJECTIVES

1. Instructors will understand what freewriting is.

2. Instructors will appreciate how frewriting can be valuable as a teaching strategy.

3. Instructors will be able to describe and demonstrate the steps in the process.

RESOURCES

* Freewriting sheet (handbook)

FOLLOW-UP

Questions to facilitate discussion (after tape-before activity):

1. What is freewriting? (Unstructured writing--without worrying about organization or grammar. A way of getting your ideas out on paper so you can work with them.)

2. Why is freewriting described as "a discovery process?" (No way to know what you may write.

Ideas flow into each other as you discover what you know/feel about a subject.)

3. How can freewriting be valuable in the classroom? (Relax students; help them get into the writing mood; break the writing "barriers;" bring out a variety of ideas.)

4. How do you start your students freewriting--what are the steps to use? (Choose a topic; discuss--yes/no; write.)

ACTIVITY

Steps:

1. Restate the topic you have selected.
2. Decide if the group will discuss the topic before writing.
3. Individuals freewrite for 10-15 minutes.
4. Start tape.

Section 7: Sharing Freewriting

(Time/5:10)

RATIONALE

Instructors need to be able to work with student freewriting to help them identify ideas to use in writing their paper.

SYNOPSIS

Group members model the process of sharing and pulling good writing ideas out of freewriting. Shows how the interaction of the group can make this an exciting learning experience. The group leader demonstrates how ideas are generated and relationships between those ideas are drawn during this stage of the writing process. Together they discover some of the advantages of sharing freewriting.

(1) Students have something tangible prepared to share.

(2) Students see different perspectives on a topic.

(3) Group members can help each other identify usable ideas.

(4) Group leader can point up strengths and interesting points (tone, etc.).

OBJECTIVES

1. Instructors will understand how group sharing can effectively model the process individuals will use in their own writing.

2. Instructors will be able to describe and demonstrate the sharing process.

FOLLOW-UP

Questions to facilitate discussion (after tape-before activity):

1. What are some advantages of group freewriting? (People more willing and able to risk in group--have something written to share--can see how others think and discover new ideas--can learn as a group and help each other.)

2. What are some of the guidelines in facilitating this sharing? (Have someone record ideas on chalkboard; act as gatekeeper; don't force participation but encourage; help students become aware of the wealth of ideas in their writing; comment on relationships and points of interest.)

ACTIVITY

Steps:

1. Identify someone to record the ideas on the board
2. Let each read his/her freewriting.
3. Group discusses/identifies ideas from the freewriting (record on board).
4. Start tape when all have read and discussion is over.

Section 8: Organizing Your Ideas (Time/4:15)

RATIONALE

Instructors need to provide students with specific models for organizing their writing.

SYNOPSIS

Discusses the importance of organization in writing and reminds us of the GED Writing Sample emphasis on purpose and structure! Suggests ways to organize the rough ideas in preparing to write the paper. Some examples of ways to group ideas are given:

(1) Compare and contrast
(2) Cause and effect
(3) Classification

OBJECTIVES

1. Instructors will be aware of the emphasis on structure and purpose in a paper.

2. Instructors will be able to use several organizational patterns to organize writing.

RESOURCES

* Review sheet on cognitive mapping (handbook)
* Readings to explore organizational patterns (handbook)

FOLLOW-UP

Questions to facilitate discussion:

1. Why is this step important in the writing process? (Need to have structure and purpose on GED Writing Sample--serves as a way to work from the ideas into the paper--students need explicit practice with this so they can use it in their writing.)

2. What are some of the models useful in organizing ideas? (Compare-contrast/cause-effect/classification)

3. Define or describe each--perhaps by giving an

example. (Compare-contrast: relationship between ideas that are alike or different. Cause-effect: relationship is causal--one idea is the result of the other. Classification: grouping ideas into categories to show relationship.

ACTIVITY

Steps:

1. Work with the compare-contrast model on the group's freewriting ideas.
2. Then try the cause-effect model.
3. See how the classification model fits your ideas.
4. Choose the best model to use in organizing this paper.
5. Start tape.

Section 9: Moving from Ideas to Form

(Time/5:30)

RATIONALE

Instructors need to be able to show their students how to turn their ideas into a paper.

SYNOPSIS

Underscores the importance of working as a group initially because of the difficulty of this step. Discusses how to use key words to express your ideas and show the direction or point of view your paper will take. Again, the interaction of the group helps to enliven the process and clarify ideas.

OBJECTIVES

1. Instructors will be able to demonstrate how to use key words to write a clear topic sentence.

2. Instructors will be able to guide a group through the paragraph/paper writing step.

RESOURCES

* Outline of essay form (handbook)

FOLLOW-UP

Questions to facilitate discussion:

1. Why is the modeling process important at this stage? (Organizing ideas into a written paper is difficult. It needs to be modeled and practiced in the group; interaction helps each group member to see how others are thinking as they write; provides a chance for the teacher to work with the group on sentence structure and word choice by eliciting varied input from group.)

ACTIVITY

Steps:

1. Write (as a group) your topic sentence--from key words you identify as central to your idea.
2. Work as a group to write the essay on this topic.
3. Start the tape.

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RESOURCES: REPRODUCIBLES FOR IN-SERVICE PARTICIPANTS

WRITING TOPICS

Experience (Narrative) topics	Idea (Analytical) topics
Ask the writer to discuss:	Ask the writer to explain:
who	why
what	how
when	what are the parts
where	what are the reasons

The GED Writing Sample expects the writer to use analytical writing skills to argue a position.

****

SAMPLE WRITING TOPICS

Experience Topics

1. Write about your best or your worst experience in school.
2. Describe a job you have had.
3. Write about your family.
4. Describe a person who has meant a lot to you.
5. Write about an experience (or a decision) that changed your life.

Idea Topics

1. Discuss a problem you have seen in a place where you have worked.
2. Discuss a problem in your community.
3. What are your goals.
4. Discuss how and why the American family has changed.
5. Discuss the effects of the automobile (the computer or the television) on American society.

Organize your topics into several test sheets using a format similar to the one below. Also, keep an on-going list of topics for instructors to reference in classwork--remind them to add topics to the list as they "invent" them throughout the year.

WRITING SAMPLE

Choose ONE (1) of the following topics and write a composition of about 200 words. In preparing your answer remember to:

1) Read all of the information accompanying the question.

2) Plan your answer carefully before you write.

3) Read carefully what you have written and make any changes that will improve your writing.

4) Check your paragraphing, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage, and make any necessary corrections.

A. The television has changed life in many ways. Some of these changes have improved our lives and some have created problems for us.

Write a composition describing the effects of the television on our lives. You may describe the positive effects, the negative effects, or both. Be specific, and use examples to support your answer.

OR

B. Each community has special problems that its members are trying to solve. For instance, in Albuquerque, air pollution is a major concern.

Discuss a problem in your community. Explain the reasons for this problem and give your opinion about how the problem could be handled. Be specific and use examples to support your opinion.

MONITORING STUDENT WRITING

Many teachers in ABE use individual conferencing to provide feedback to their students. This is a good strategy for writing instruction, too! Conferencing will be more effective if comments and assignments are recorded. The student assignment sheet included in the handbook can be a useful record in several ways:

(1) Topics which have already been used for student writing are documented.

(2) Dates indicate how regularly the student is writing and conferencing.

(3) Teacher comments indicate areas for future work and provide a record of strengths and improvement for the student.

(4) Specific skill assignments based on conference results can be made and recorded. For instance, if a student paper has many sentence fragment errors, an instructor may want to assign some practice materials from resources available in the classroom.

(5) Review of these records can help the instructor identify common problems for group work. Then the instructor can more effectively structure and guide the group writing sessions.

Remember to talk about the grading criteria used to score the actual GED Writing Sample when you conference with your students about their papers! Emphasizing the three elements of purpose, structure, and usage will help the students keep the importance of each in mind.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT SHEET

NAME _____

Writing Assignments:

Topic	Date/Conference notes
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Skill Review:

Skill	Assignment

FREE-WRITING

FREE-WRITING is a way to get started on a writing project; it helps you put your mind and hand "in gear." In free writing, you discover what you have to say.

Free writing is writing without stopping. When you free-write, you write as quickly as you can for at least ten minutes. If you don't know what to write, just write any word that comes to mind. Remember, you must keep writing. Don't worry whether what you write makes sense or whether the spelling and punctuation is correct. In free writing, you are concerned with the flow of words and ideas, and stopping to correct errors at this point may interfere with your train of thought. Later, you can arrange these ideas and work on the organization, spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Now, free-write for ten minutes.

Now, look at what you have written. "Writing is good for us," Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "because it brings our thoughts out into the open as a boy turns his pockets inside out to see what is in them." Free-writing shows us what is on our minds.

****

Now try another kind of free-writing:FOCUSED FREE-WRITING. Write for five minutes as quickly as you can, but this time stay on one topic - music.

Read what you have written on music. Is there an idea in your writing that you would like to explore? Now, write for ten minutes on this idea.

FOCUSED FREE-WRITING is a good way to begin a paper because it helps you remember all the experiences and ideas that you have which are connected to the topic. Once these ideas and experiences are on paper, you can begin to work with them and create a finished piece of writing.

COGNITIVE MAPPING

Cognitive mapping is a method of visually working with ideas; it helps students move from generating ideas to organizing ideas. After using brainstorming, clustering, and freewriting to collect ideas on the board or paper, students organize these ideas into "lists" and discuss how they are related to each other. Cognitive mapping can be used to diagram an article students have read or a paper they are going to write. As students work with this technique, their diagrams become more complex. Students should be encouraged to use varied symbols (=, and be creative in visually showing how their ideas relate.

SAMPLE: Changes in the American Family (freewriting ideas)

time...quality time
single parents...doing 2 jobs
working parents...stress, frustration, guilt
T.V. watching...lost art of communication
older children as role models
recreation...individual activities vs family time
jobs for self-fulfillment
children left along....children lonely and insecure
growing pains...no one at home to help
greater responsibility of young children
tightly scheduled time
changing values/morals.....divorce more acceptable

** Using the Classification Model: "Changing patterns in America have created problems for the American family."

Work Patterns	Recreation Patterns	Social Patterns
2 working parents less time for kids/no one at home etc.	individual nature of today's rec-reation. T.V. interferes with family communication etc.	Divorce more accepted Single parent family has more problems: chores $ pressure guilt etc.

**Using the Comparison-Contrast Model: "Compare the traditional idea of the American family with the reality of today."

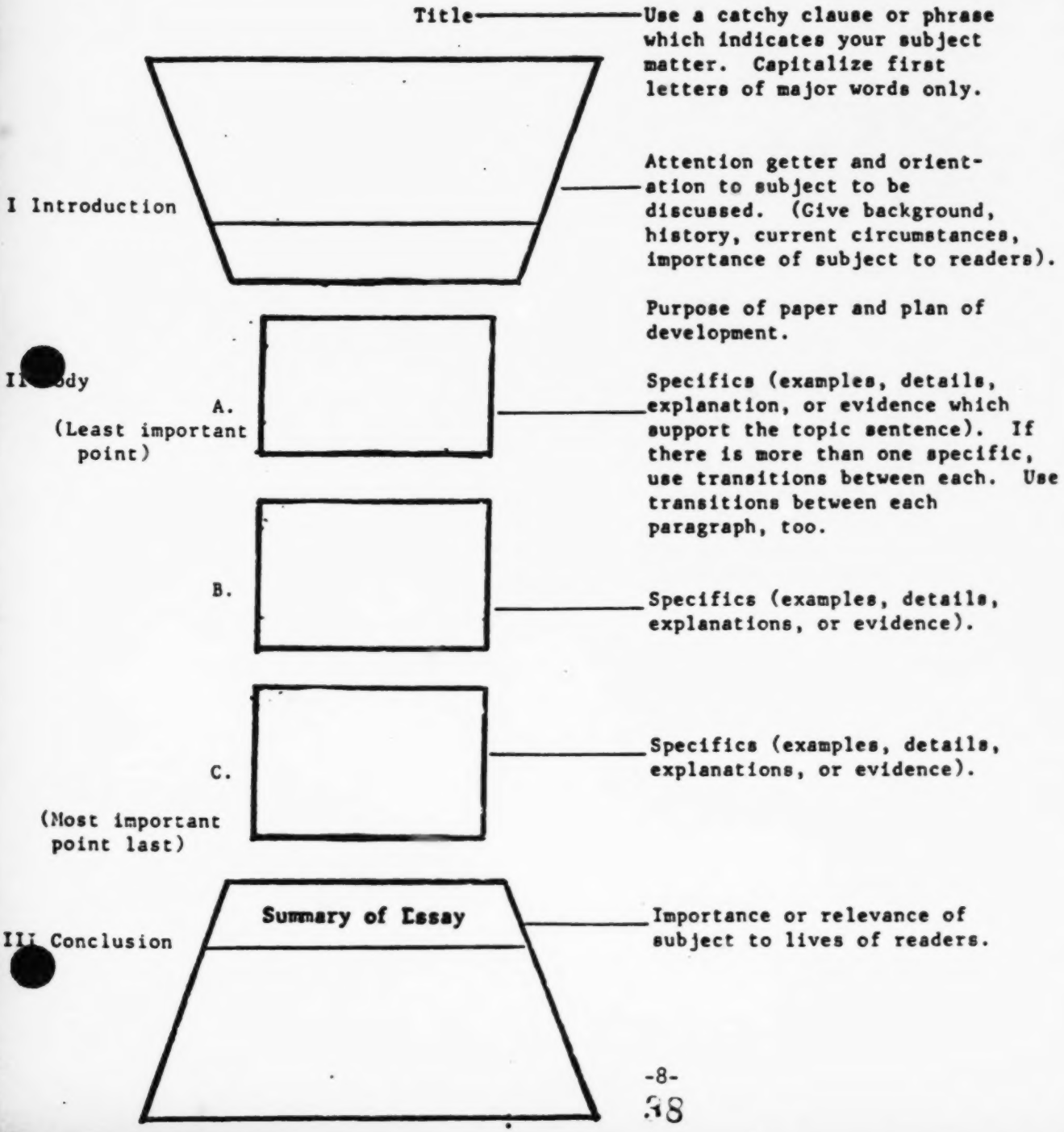
Group 1: traditional	Group 2: today
mother at home family evenings/ dinner/conversa- tions 2 parents to share responsi- bilities etc.	2 working parents or 1 single parent constraints on time communication problems etc.

**Using the Cause-Effect Model: "What factors have caused problems for the American family?"

Causes	Effects
1. working parents	1. stress, frustration guilt children left alone
2. tightly scheduled time	2. less time for communication stress,guilt
3. changing values	3. single parent families/divorce T.V. watching individual style of recreation

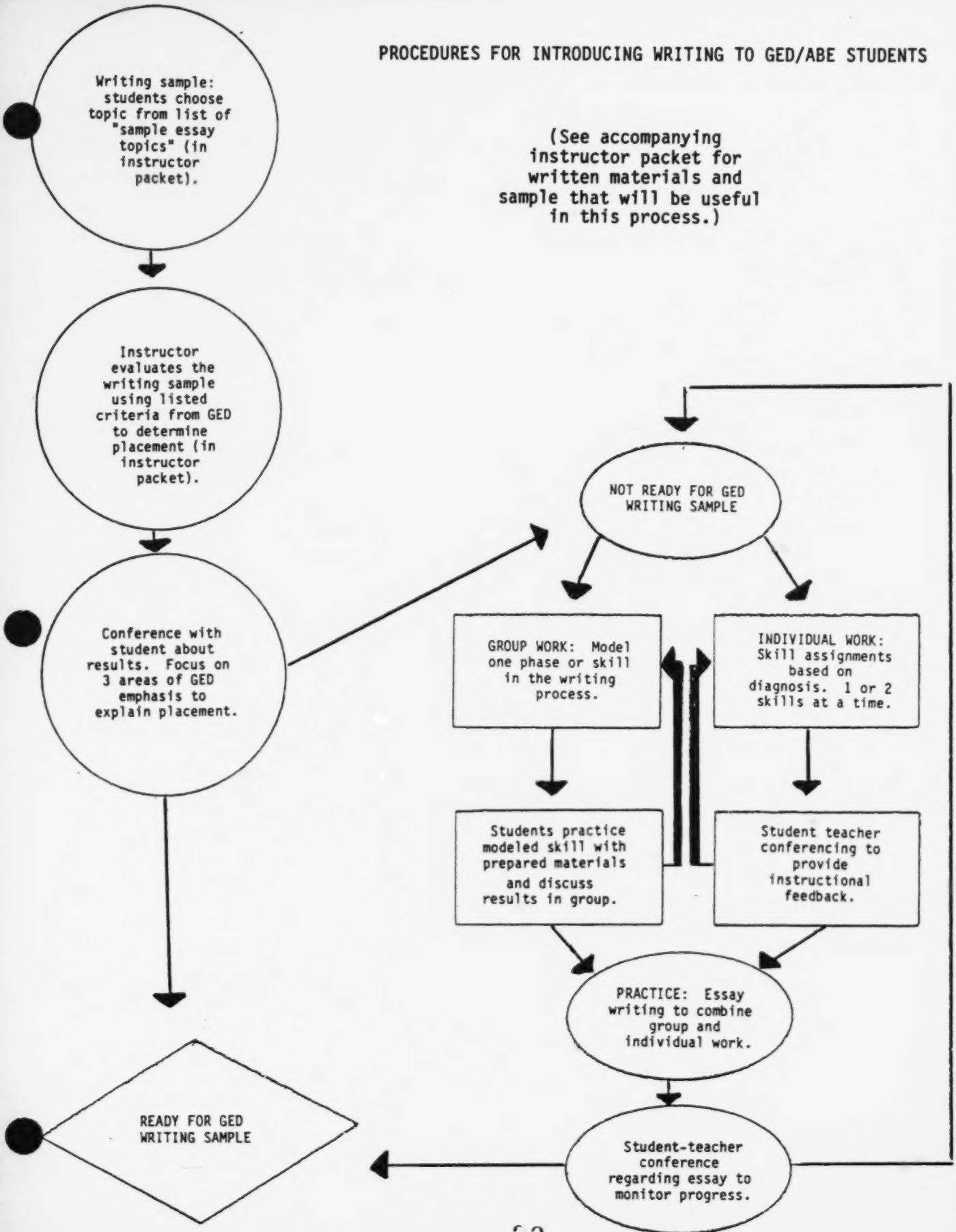
STRUCTURAL OUTLINE OF THE ESSAY FORM

Essays generally consist of three parts: I, an introduction; II, a body; and III, a conclusion. The introduction captures the reader's interest, gives the writer's attitude toward his subject, and explains how the subject will be developed. The body is broken down into a number of paragraphs, each of which develops in detail the points being made to support the thesis. The conclusion briefly summarizes (but does not repeat) the ideas of the essay and connects the discovery which the writer has made to the lives of the readers. The conclusion wraps up and rounds off an essay and does not introduce any new ideas.


Title
Use a catchy clause or phrase which indicates your subject matter. Capitalize first letters of major words only.
Attention getter and orientation to subject to be discussed. (Give background, history, current circumstances, importance of subject to readers).
I Introduction
Purpose of paper and plan of development.
II Body
A.
(Least important point)
Specifics (examples, details, explanation, or evidence which support the topic sentence). If there is more than one specific, use transitions between each. Use transitions between each paragraph, too.
B.
Specifics (examples, details, explanations, or evidence).
C.
Specifics (examples, details, explanations, or evidence).
(Most important point last)
Summary of Essay
Importance or relevance of subject to lives of readers.
III Conclusion

PROCEDURES FOR INTRODUCING WRITING TO GED/ABE STUDENTS

(See accompanying instructor packet for written materials and sample that will be useful in this process.)


Writing sample: students choose topic from list of "sample essay topics" (in instructor packet).
Instructor evaluates the writing sample using listed criteria from GED to determine placement (in instructor packet).
Conference with student about results. Focus on 3 areas of GED emphasis to explain placement.
READY FOR GED WRITING SAMPLE
NOT READY FOR GED WRITING SAMPLE
GROUP WORK: Model one phase or skill in the writing process.
INDIVIDUAL WORK: Skill assignments based on diagnosis. 1 or 2 skills at a time.
Students practice modeled skill with prepared materials and discuss results in group.
Student teacher conferencing to provide instructional feedback.
PRACTICE: Essay writing to combine group and individual work.
Student-teacher conference regarding essay to monitor progress.

Additional Sources for Professional Development in Writing:

1. Contemporary Books, Inc.
   180 North Michigan Ave.
   Chicago, Ill. 60601

   "The GED Writing Sample: How to Prepare for the Test."

   This tape could be used with teachers and/or students. The focus is on developing a clear understanding of the new writing sample component of the GED. Clear explanations of how the test is organized, the scoring process being used, and good test taking guidelines are presented. This approach is designed to reduce the anxiety both teachers and students are feeling about the new test.

   "The Process of Writing: What Works for Teachers and Students."

   This tape presents several strategies teachers use in writing situations. It gives a good overall view of the writing process, step by step.

2. American Council on Education
   Call: GED Testing Service
   One Dupont Circle N.W.
   Washington, D.D. 20036
   (202) 939-9475

   "The 1988 Tests of General Educational Development: A Preview."

   This book contains an overview of the committee recommendations which have been incorporated into the new forms of the GED test. A discussion of the changes in focus and sample questions are included for each section: Writing, Social Studies, Science, Interpreting Literature and the Arts, and Mathematics. Of particular interest is the Writing Skills section that discusses the Essay Test. Sample student essays and scoring comments for each included in that section clarify the criteria used in evaluating student essays.

3. "Effective Teaching of Writing and Thinking Skills"
   (Article by Janet Vucinich included in your handbook)

   This summary of freewriting and writing instruction in general would be a valuable source of information to your instructors. Please feel free to make copies from your original at your discretion.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

KEY TERMS IN ESSAY EXAMINATIONS

Compare: to show how things, ideas, characteristics, or methods are similar. Differences may also be mentioned.

Contrast: to show the differences between things, qualities, methods, events, or problems.

Criticize: to express your judgement about the positive and negative points of a subject. You need to use evidence to support your position.

Define: to give the formal meaning of a term.

Describe: to tell about something in detail.

Diagram: to present a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic representation and label it.

Discuss: to examine, analyze carefully, and present considerations, pro and con, regarding the problems. This type of question expects a complete and detailed answer.

Enumerate: to list points and number them.

Evaluate: to give the positive and negative points on a topic and explain which outweighs the other and why.

Illustrate: to explain by giving examples.

Justify: to explain the reasons for something. To provide supporting evidence.

Prove: to provide facts and reasons to show something to be true.

Relate: to show connections among things, ideas, methods, or theories.

Summarize: to give, in condensed form, the main points or facts. All details illustrations, and examples are to be omitted.

Trace: to describe the development or history of a subject.

Adapted from University of Minnesota Reading and Study Skills Center
and
Reading and Study Skills, John Langan

Glossary of Keys Terms Used in Discussing Writing

Thesis Statement
- -A sentence that expresses the main idea of the essay. The thesis statement is found in the introduction.

Topic Sentence
- -A sentence that conveys the purpose or main idea of a paragraph. The topic sentence is usually at the beginning of a paragraph but may be in other positions as well.

General/Specific
- -Clear writing has both general statements to communicate the main idea and specific details which support and develop the general statement. There are occasions when the general statement is essential, but the use of specific language whenever possible improves clarity.

Organization
- -The arrangement of details used within a paragraph to clarify and develop the topic of the paragraph
- -The arrangement of paragraphs which contribute to the clarification and the development of the thesis

Unity
- -The use of supporting details to contribute directly and specifically to the development of the topic. Any material which is irrelevant to the subject under discussion destroys the unity of a piece of writing.

Transitions
- -A word, phase, sentence, or paragraph that connects information and ideas. Common transitions are: first of all, before, but, and therefore.

Fragment (Incomplete Sentence)
- -Any group of words which is punctuated as a sentence but which lacks a subject, verb, and does not express a complete thought

Run-on (including comma splices)
- -Two or more complete thoughts that are run together as one sentence. Run-ons can be corrected by using a period or a semicolon or by using certain conjunctions and a comma.

Agreement
- -A usage problem occuring when the verb of a subject does not agree in number (singular or plural) with its subject. For example: Each of the students have their books.
- -Or when a pronoun does not agree in number, gender, or person with the word it replaces. For example: The committee called their meeting.

Punctuation
- -Appropriate use of end punctuation, commas, colons, semi-colons, and apostrophes

THE GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TESTING SERVICE
of the American Council on Education
One Dupont Circle
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-833-4680

Ten Tips for Teaching Writing in Adult Education

1. Give frequent writing assignments. Most writing teachers agree that students learn to write best when they write regularly. Writing assignments may vary in length and complexity; it isn't necessary to require an essay in every assignment. Rather, try to transform most assignments into writing exercises of some sort, whether they involve writing lists, sentences, paragraphs, or longer pieces. The point is to help students grow familiar with the process of putting ideas into written form.

2. Design writing assignments so that they relate to students' interests. At the same time that you are increasing the number of writing tasks, you must take care to construct the assignments carefully. Writing without purpose is time-consuming and pointless, and students recognize this. But there are many legitimate purposes in writing to which students can easily relate: to release tension, to express creative energy, to communicate ideas, to think through a problem or situation, to tell a story, to amuse or entertain, to defend a position or belief. The best topics for writing are those that engage the students' interests and allow them to demonstrate their strengths as thinkers and writers. Though they require more effort from instructors, topics developed in consultation with individual students are often the best, especially if the topics demonstrate to the students how writing is useful in their lives. For example, a student who enjoys telling jokes or stories should be urged to relate them in writing, while a student who believes fervently in a particular cause or belief might be asked to defend a position in writing. More practically-oriented assignments include writing a letter complaining about a product or service that didn't meet expectations, writing a set of directions to a particular place, writing a description of a significant event or development at work, and writing a letter setting forth the reasons a person deserves a promotion or a raise.

3. Take time to relieve students' anxieties about writing. Many writing teachers speak of encountering students' natural reluctances to write. The teacher's challenge is to overcome the reluctance by providing students with frequent opportunities to write about subjects the students have a real interest in. Ungraded free writing and journals may be appropriate "loosening up" exercises in this case. A five or ten minute free writing period can be offered at the beginning of every class or writing session. This gives students an opportunity to begin writing thoughts and words without concern for "correctness" and thus makes the prospect of beginning a structured writing assignment less intimidating.

4. Writing is a process. This is a point that bears repeating to students who often feel blocked from writing because they view it as a complete and perfect product. All student writers, but particularly those having difficulty getting words onto paper, need to be alerted to the fact that writing is a lengthy series of steps, unique for each writer, proceeding from conception of ideas to listing to composing to editing to polishing, with many secondary steps along the way. While

some writing processes--or parts of them--may be more efficient than others, students must understand that there is nothing inherently correct or incorrect about those steps: people get to different places by different methods. It is probably more effective to teach a variety of methods than it is to teach a single right method of writing.

Reassuring students that writing is a complex process serves students well in several ways. Students become alert to the fact that writing takes a good deal of time and effort, and that issues like "correctness" and "mistakes" are second in importance to the ideas being conveyed. Students will also feel less inhibited about writing if they know they are not expected to churn out perfect copy the instant their pens touch paper. Emphasizing process allows teachers greater opportunities for effective intervention. In other words, a teacher who is involved in the students' composing activities has a far better chance to affect the students' writings and to suggest strategies than does the teacher who gives an assignment and waits for the final copy to be handed in.

5. Emphasize that the grading is another part of the total writing process. Too often, students achieve what they recognize as perfection in a piece of writing, only to discover later that their instructor recognized the product, by some unfathomable code, as somehow imperfect. This is, understandably, a common source of frustration for writing students: they don't feel that they have a sufficient understanding, or a sufficient chance at understanding, the standards against which their writing will be evaluated.

There are as many methods of grading writing as there are writing teachers, but it may be worthwhile to suggest a few of the options. One approach, especially useful in making students feel more comfortable about having their writing graded, is peer evaluation. Students often find it useful to hear that the instructor is not alone in seeing problems in their writing. The peer evaluation also serves to give students other than the writer a chance to see other methods of writing, other thought processes, other degrees of control, and thus it allows each student to gain a sense of perspective within the class. A note of caution: the "peers" in a class of beginning writers are themselves likely to be beginners, so their evaluations may be less than cogent. It is up to the instructor to provide the necessary guidance to ensure that the group discussion addresses the needs of the writer and of the group. Too, it is sometimes necessary to establish some basic ground rules to protect the sensitivities of the person whose writing is up for discussion.

Another approach is not to give a grade for a piece of writing until it is perfect, and to direct the writer towards improvements during the intervening stages of evaluation. This technique is described in full in tip #7.

If you want students to take a broader view of their writing and its overall effectiveness, you might want to teach them how to score papers holistically. (For a brief description of holistic scoring, see "How the GED Essay Test Is Scored.") Students are usually able to catch on to holistic scoring with little difficulty, and the process serves to focus their thinking on what makes for effective writing. One approach is to ask students to rank a set of papers representing a range of quality. After everyone has voted on a score for each of the papers, you might generate a discussion of the particular characteristics that made the top paper effective and the bottom paper weak. In this way, students begin to grasp the characteristics of good writing inductively.

6. Use the students' writings to teach specific sk ills. The students' ideas--the content of the papers--should always be the point of departure in a detailed consideration of the writing, but what about grammar, usage, and the conventions of English? It's one thing to encourage students to write frequently and even to teach them to score writing holistically, but neither activity, by itself, will necessarily teach students how to identify and correct errors in the conventions of English. If a student's writing is marred by a variety of sentence fragments, what better way to teach the recognition and correction of fragments? Students are much more likely to learn how to edit when it is their own ideas and language that are providing the context. If a student's writing is not overrun with fragments, there's no need to search for material to teach fragments. Teach sentence structure to the extent students need it; students need it to the extent their writing demonstrates the need.

7. Whoever is doing the correcting is doing the learning. Use the students' writings as source material for teaching sentence structure, but let the students do the correcting. When an instructor indicates in bright red ink how a sentence fragment should be corrected, even if the student is required to rewrite, all he or she is learning is how to copy. If the goal is to teach the student to identify and correct the errors, then let the student do it! The instructor can indicate at the bottom of the paragraph or essay that there is one sentence fragment and one subject-verb agreement error and return the pages to the student, who should be responsible for identifying and correcting the errors. If that approach is too difficult, a preliminary stage is to indicate for the student the line on which the error occurs. This does half the job for the student, but at least it leaves the responsibility for correcting where it belongs--in the hands of the writer.

8. Set reasonable objectives and use an incremental approach to skills. Beginning writers typically make many errors, so it would be easy to inundate them with lists of errors to find and correct. This will succeed only in frustrating the students, who will begin to wonder if they've done anything right. Try limiting a rewriting requirement on one of the first papers to the identification and correction of sentence fragments. Bite down hard and overlook the other errors on the paper for the time being. On the next paper (or the next rewrite of the same paper), make students responsible for correcting both sentence fragments and run-on sentences. Continue with this approach, adding one or two tasks each time (without slipping back on one that has been mastered), until gradually students are doing a thorough job of editing.

9. Choose or create drill materials which call upon students to use their own ideas and language. If students get hung up on a particular skill, like identifying and correcting sentence fragments, it may be necessary to provide some drill work to give them enough practice. There is nothing inherently wrong with using drill materials, but multiple choice, underlining, or circling type exercises will represent a radical departure for students who have been devoting their energies to writing. Drill work is valuable if the student needs practice on a particular skill, but its limitation is that the practice is not presented in the student's language; thus, the amount of transfer is severely limited. Sentence-writing or sentence-completion materials will often serve the same purpose as circling or underlining exercises, but they offer the clear advantage of getting the student more actively involved as a writer. In short, don't ask students to circle the verb; ask them to write one.

10. Don't restrict writing to the language arts curriculum. Writing is not so much a subject in its own right as it is an enabling skill, a learning tool. And it can be used effectively as a tool to help students learn social studies, science, literature and mathematics while they are writing. Writing without content is little more than a series of words strung together. The content is there in whatever the student knows or is trying to learn. Use it.

***

To sum up, give students frequent, meaningful opportunities to write, make their writing the focus of their learning, and emphasize that correctness is a final (and sometimes arbitrary) stage of a complex process. Hopefully, the students will soon come to see that the process itself can be the best reward.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE GED WRITING SAMPLE

CHARACTERISTICS AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE WRITING SAMPLE ITEM

- Two types of compositions
- Directions
- Requirements
- Exercise book and composition structure

GED Writing Sample items call for one of two types of compositions. One type requires the writer to take and support a position on a particular issue or subject. The other requires the writer to compose an expository piece, to explain something.

The directions advise the GED candidate to plan, write, proofread and revise the composition. Compositions should be about two hundred words long. The whole process must be completed in forty-five minutes.

It is important that candidates understand and adhere to assigned composition topics. A composition's point of view must be clear and well supported. Compositions are not required to have a set number of paragraphs; the effectiveness of a composition is not predicated on its using a prescribed structure.

Guides and guidelines in the exercise book are designed to be applied to compositions four or more paragraphs long. It is possible that some students will be able to write effective compositions with fewer paragraphs. The guides and guidelines must be adjusted, on a case-by-case basis, for evaluation of one-, two-, or three-paragraph compositions. Students who may benefit from following a guideline for paragraphing and composition structure might be advised to try a four-paragraph model — the first paragraph for the point of view or main idea, the second and third for supporting examples or reasons, and the fourth for the conclusion.

HOLISTIC SCORING

- Basic assumptions
- Implications
- The six-point scale
- Per point characteristics

(All the information in this section is paraphrased, with permission, from the GED Testing Service's "How the GED Test Is Scored.")

The underlying assumptions holistic scoring makes are that each element of the writing in a composition is related to all the others and that no element can be separated from the others.

Compositions on the GED are evaluated for their overall effectiveness, so isolated errors don't carry great significance.

GED readers score compositions on a six-point scale, from low (1) to high (6). Since there are no partial points (no 3.5, for example), and since there is an even number of points, there is no midpoint on the scale. Consequently, all papers fall into either the upper or lower half of the range.

Characteristics of compositions at each point on the scale are described in the table on the next page.

POINT	CHARACTERISTICS OF COMPOSITIONS
6	Noticeable for a distinctive approach or point of view. Tend to offer sophisticated ideas within a clear organizational framework appropriate for the topic. Supporting statements are particularly effective because of their specificity or illustrative quality. May suffer an occasional lapse in usage or mechanics, but primarily demonstrate fluency with language.
5	Clearly and effectively organized with sufficient support for major points. May go beyond the situation or context provided in the topic: display a maturity of thought. May lack the flair and grace of a 6 composition, but diction and surface features are consistently under control, despite an occasional usage error.
4	Show evidence of an organizational plan, though the support tends to be less extensive or less convincing than that in 5 or 6 compositions. Observe conventions of accepted usage—some errors, but not severe enough to interfere significantly with the main purpose.
3	Lack the planning or development apparent in 4 compositions. If organized, rely on simplistic listing or haphazard recitation of ideas. Ineffective in accomplishing their purpose. Demonstrate repeated weaknesses in usage.
2	Have marked lack of development or inadequate support for ideas. Frequently show unsophisticated or superficial level of thought; often have listing of unsupported generalizations. Rather than a clear purpose, present conflicting purposes. Usage errors seriously interfere with overall effectiveness.
1	Clearly demonstrate lack of control. Have no clear plan. Do not adhere to usage conventions. Purpose is not apparent and, therefore, not accomplished.

SAMPLE ESSAYS WITH HOLISTIC SCORES AND COMMENTS

Eight student-written essays follow in typewritten transcriptions of manuscript. The transcriptions exclude only parts the writers, themselves, crossed out and accidental marks on the original pages.

The essays have been included here with the permission of the GED Testing Service. They, and the comments about them, which are abbreviated versions of the Testing Service's discussions, are from "Instructional Materials for the GED Essay Test" (November, 1984).

The essays are *not* examples of writing in response to a GED-like item. That is, since the compositions support a proposal in the face of opposition, they were *not* written in response to an item requiring taking and supporting a stand or explaining something.

The essays *are*, however, examples of student writing that illustrate well the qualities of writing described in the six sections of the preceding table.

Each of the essays was evaluated by two trained readers. The score each reader gave is reported. The essays are in order from highest to lowest scores.

SAMPLE A

Scores: 6 and 6

Ladies and gentlemen, I have been asked to come speak to you tonight about the recreation center project that has been proposed by some students at the local high school. I have heard all of the arguments that many of you have voiced against it, but I also can see the needs of today's young

people, and I believe to turn this proposal down would have a devastating effect on the future of our community.

If you look in any newspaper, you will probably see stories of mounting crime in our cities: robberies, murders, and other terrible deeds. You will probably also notice that many of these criminals are merely teenagers. Every year, more and more young people are convicted of serious crimes. Could it be that they have nothing to do with their leisure time? Do they have nowhere to go to keep out of trouble?

In our community they certainly don't. Yet when a group of young people come up with an idea to keep these kids from getting into trouble, do we gladly accept it? No! We complain about lowering property values or bringing in the "undesirables." I say this center would prevent our young people from becoming "undesirables." This recreation center is just what our young people need, and to deny them of it would be to inadvertently contribute to the delinquency of minors! Let's do something nice for our kids for a change and vote "yes"! Thank you very much and good evening.

COMMENT:

Though not a perfect paper, it has a solid structure presenting a fluent argument. The effective introduction establishes the issue's background and the writer's position. The second paragraph connects teenagers to mounting crime. The third paragraph refocuses on the community under discussion and how mounting crime can be avoided in it. Rhetorical questions are used with effective control.

SAMPLE B **Scores: 6 and 5**

A supervised, student-oriented recreation center would be nothing but a plus to this community. It would keep kids off the streets and also enable them to simply have a good time together. If the center was run properly, property values would be sustained and undesirables kept out.

The best function of the center would be keeping kids out of trouble. If kids arent out on the streets, they are far less likely to be doing things they aren't supposed to. A good rec center might bring these kids off the street and into a supervised, enjoyable environment.

Kids always seem to be able to have a good time together. If the center was created, kids would have a place to go to have fun. They wouldnt have to lie to parents about their plans, nor would parents have to be concerned with their children's whereabouts.

It seems that some residents in the area are opposed to the plan – they are worried about depression of property values and also about attracting undesirables to the area. If the center is organized and supervised, its appearance will be clean. Property values should not be harmed if this is the case. With the proper supervision, the undesirables can be weeded out and rejected, if the citizens desire. They can also possibly be helped at the center in its supervised environment. No matter which path is taken after the construction of the center, the obvious decision right now is to go ahead with the plans.

COMMENT:

The introduction, though not as graceful as Sample A's, establishes the point of view and the plan for the composition's development. Subsequent paragraphs abide by the plan and offer supporting arguments. The final paragraph challenges the opposition effectively—a good strategy—and concludes with a recommendation. The sentences and vocabulary are sophisticated.

SAMPLE C **Scores: 5 and 5**

I believe a recreation center would be a good influence on students. The students could go there, relax, talk and discuss homework. Many students feel alienated on the school campus but maybe this would help them feel more accepted and keep them in school instead of dropping out. After all isn't it

better to have them at a recreation center than out wandering the streets aimlessly and getting into trouble.

I also think this idea would help develop responsibility on the part of the students. This could be achieved by having students maintain and run the recreation center under the guidance of a supervisor.

I feel if there is something to be done to help students feel good about what they are doing then we as the public should support them however we can. The idea could catch on and be a national custom. If all of you people would just consider this idea, weight out the pro's and cons objectively you will see things as I do and we will have a recreation center which I am sure will have more positive than negetive aspects. It could help in making this a better place to live in the future.

Thank you

COMMENT:

Like Samples A and B, this one has a persuasive but less powerfully presented case. The first paragraph doesn't introduce the topic, but states a position and offers the first supporting reason. Other effective supporting reasons are added. The sentence structure is less sophisticated than in Samples A and B, and contains diction and punctuation errors. Altogether, the composition supports an argument, expressing ideas according to the conventions of English.

SAMPLE D **Scores: 4 and 4**

I think that you should change the old house into a recreation center because it will keep alot of young people out of trouble. Instead of going out and drinking or getting into trouble, they will have a place to go. Here, they won't get into trouble because they will be under the supervision of responsible adults and in the presence of other young people who choose to come here instead of getting into trouble. I don't think it would attract "undesirable types of people because young people know that they can't get into any trouble under the supervision of adults. One minor problem is that it may lower the property values in the neighborhood. One solution to that is that it could have certain hours for it to be open, and it should close at a reasonable time at night like 9:00 p.m. I think that if we can get the residents of this neighborhood to agree on rules and standards, we will have a thriving center for young people in search of good clean fun.

COMMENT:

The paper begins with a statement of its position. It offers one support (that a recreation center will keep people out of trouble) and expands on it with details. The central argument is strengthened by discussing and proposing a resolution to the property value objection. The paragraph concludes with a fluent complex sentence summing up the position.

SAMPLE E **Scores: 4 and 3**

Hi. My name is (name deleted). Im a 17 year old Senior at (name deleted) High School. I speak in behalf of most of those students at the High school who want a Recreation Room which in this case is an old home. I see nothing wrong at all with this idea. It is a place for students to go if they have free time. It may prevent kids from getting into trouble. If the place has elected officers or officials who are students it can be kept in order and kept up. Sort of like a student Gov. at the school. This place would not be a handicap for the value or reputation of the neighborhood, it would show that the parents and faculty are working with the kids and maker better relationships. If something goes wrong, close it down but for now give us our chance. We know who to let come in and who not to. Come on let us try.

I thank you

COMMENT:

After a haphazard introduction, "I see nothing wrong with . . . " ineffectively states the position. There is support and a clear focus, but sentence structure problems (together with the introduction) weaken the overall effectiveness.

SAMPLE F **Scores: 3 and 3**

I agree with the students plan of action. The students need places to go to meet with others instead of meeting on the street. Students need relaxation and somewhere to go where they feel most comfortable. If anyone were to oppose it, I feel that that it wouldn't help at all because older people don't realize how much young people need to hang around their friends and be somewhere where they won't feel so uptight. If the students want to do the work on the house they need to do it. In my brief speech of supporting the students action is said in my paragraph. I feel is the case was to go to court I have no doubts about winning. It is as simple as that. Students want to do the work on it and they do need it so I feel they would get it.

COMMENT:

The composition is not persuasive. It begins with a clear statement of a position and lists reasons, but the reasoning breaks down. In the second half, sentence structure problems interfere with the communication.

SAMPLE G **Scores: 2 and 2**

Well the way that I think is that the kids deserve to have a house like that because they need the relaxation after school they could study there or just be with some of their friends ore even Party Down some times. If they were gonna fix the place up neat and not neglect the place or make to much noise to desterb the neighbors. They could even play games outside if they had a large field to play football. It would be good practice if they played football in school they could do the plays they need to practice for the games. The coach would really like the kid to be practiceing lifting weights and passing a few. They could even play baseball in the spring to get used to hiting the ball instead of a person I think the kids deserve something like that if their willing to keep the noise and fighting down.

COMMENT:

The introduction is weak; the composition lacks unity. Athletics begins as a supporting concept, but becomes the controlling idea, forcing the emphasis to be on the use of a field — not the recreation center. Numerous sentence structure errors further diminish effectiveness.

SAMPLE H **Scores: 1 and 1**

I think that a rec-center would be a good place for kids, for several of reasons, such that:

1. Keep them off of the streets
2. Keep them out of trouble
3. They can talk to people if he/she has a problem, if they didn't want to discuss it with their parents.
4. A place they can relax in.

There are several other reason which I will not go into. Mothers and fathers won't have to worry about where their children are at night.

But there are very few exceptions like for the Mr. Know-it-alls' children who think they can boss around the kid for instance, as they own the rec-room themselves would be exempt from coming in the rec-room.

There should be policemen there in case of an incident with a couple of fights. (Or gaurds). There should be no-smoking in the rec-room In case of a fire or something there should not be allowed no-weapons for the youngers safety.

If the children wants to build a rec-room let them, see how it turns out. If it doesn't work let them make a parking lot.

But, in my opinion the children should have a chance to see if they can do it, because they have to grow up sometime, Even though, there just in there prim – 20 of late teens they should have a chance just like if they were in charge of the rec-room.

If you don't let these children do what they want. It might end up in disaster. They children might have a better chance at the rec-room, besides on the street corners pushing, or buying dope. Raping women or little girls, or getting in trouble – such as fighting.

There are very different reasons why or why not; they should have a rec-room.

But in my opinion they should have one, at least give them a try.

COMMENT:

The composition begins with an attempt at structure, but it wanders away from the main points. Some relatively coherent parts focus on rules and procedures, not the topic. The second half evidences the lack of a controlling idea bolstered by planned support. Sentence structure errors cloud surface-level meaning.

TAKEN FROM: Tips for Teachers
Cambridge
The Adult Education Company
888 Seventh Avenue
New York, New York 10106

What I Have Lived For

--Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and thither, in a wayward course, over a deep ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair.

I have sought love, first, because it brings ecstasy-- ecstasy so great that I would often have sacrificed all the rest of life for a few hours of this joy. I have sought it, next, because it relieves loneliness-- that terrible loneliness in which one shivering consciousness looks over the rim of the world into the cold unfathomable lifeless abyss. I have sought it, finally, because in the union of love I have seen, in a mystic miniature, the prefiguring vision of the heaven that saints and poets have imagined. This is what I sought, and though it might seem too good for human life, this is what-- at last-- I have found.

With equal passion I have sought knowledge. I have wished to understand the hearts of men. I have wished to know why the stars shine.... A little of this, but not much, I have achieved.

Love and knowledge, so far as they were possible, led upward toward the heavens. But always pity brought me back to earth. Echoes of cries of pain reverberate in my heart. Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people a hated burden to their sons, and the whole world of loneliness, poverty, and pain make a mockery of what human life should be. I long to alleviate the evil, but I cannot, and I too suffer.

This has been my life. I have found it worth living, and would gladly live it again if the chance were offered me.

Note: Bertrand Russell was a British mathematician, philosopher, and social reformer. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. This passage is taken from his autobiography.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PARAGRAPH AND A THEME

A *theme*, or essay, is simply a paper of several paragraphs, rather than one long paragraph. Subjects can and should be treated more fully in a theme than they would be in a single-paragraph paper.

The main idea or point developed in a theme is called the *thesis sentence* rather than, as in a paragraph, a *topic sentence*. The thesis statement appears in the introductory paragraph, and specific support for the thesis statement appears in the paragraphs that follow.

The diagram that starts below shows the structure of a theme:

Introductory Paragraph

Introduction Thesis sentence Plan of development: Points 1, 2, 3	The *introduction* attracts the reader's interest. The *thesis sentence* states the main idea advanced in the paper. The *plan of development* is a list of the points that support the thesis. The points are presented in the order in which they will be developed in the paper.

First Supporting Paragraph

Topic sentence (Point 1) Specific evidence	The *topic sentence* advances the first supporting point for the thesis, and the *specific evidence* in the rest of the paragraph develops that first point.

Second Supporting Paragraph

Topic Sentence (Point 2) Specific evidence	The *topic sentence* advances the second supporting point for the thesis, and the *specific evidence* in the rest of the paragraph develops that second point.

Third Supporting Paragraph

Topic sentence (Point 3) Specific evidence

The *topic sentence* advances the third supporting point for the thesis, and the *specific evidence* in the rest of the paragraph develops that third point.

Closing Paragraph

Summary and/or Conclusions

A *summary* is a brief restatement of the thesis and its main points. *Conclusions* are final thoughts stemming from the subject in the paper.

Sometimes a "rounding-off" sentence at the end of the last supporting paragraph is enough to close the paper.

An Example of a Theme

Gene, the writer of the paragraph on the apple plant job (page 101), later decided to develop his subject more fully. In doing so, he expanded his original paragraph into the clearly structured theme below.

My Apple Plant Job

In the course of working my way through school, I have taken many jobs I would rather forget. I have spent nine hours a day lifting heavy automobile and truck batteries off the end of an assembly belt. I have risked the loss of eyes and fingers working a punch press in a steel plant. I have served as a ward aide in a mental hospital where I helped bathe, dress, and feed hypertense, brain-damaged men who would break into violent fits at unexpected moments. But none of these jobs was as dreadful as my job in an apple plant. The work there was physically hard; the pay was poor; and most of all, the working conditions were dismal.

Introduction

Thesis statement
Plan of development
Points 1, 2, 3

First of all, the job made enormous demands on my strength and energy. For ten hours a night, I took cartons that rolled down a metal track and stacked them onto wooden skids in a tractor trailer. Each carton contained twelve 32-ounce cans or bottles of apple juice, and

Topic sentence (Point 1)

they were heavy. They got especially heavy when lifted straight up onto the sixth and seventh rows of each stack. A fresh carton shot down the track about every fifteen seconds. I once figured out that I was lifting on the average of twelve tons of apple juice every night. When a truck was almost filled, I or my partner had to drag fourteen bulky wooden skids into the empty trailer nearby and then set up added sections of the heavy metal track so that we could start routing cartons to the back of the empty van. While one of us did the setting up, the other performed the stacking work of two men.

Topic sentence (Point 2)

I would not have minded the difficulty of the work so much if the pay had not been so poor. I was paid the minimum wage of that time, $1.25 an hour, plus the minimum of a nickel extra for working the night shift. Because of the low salary, I felt compelled to get as much overtime as possible in order to earn a decent paycheck. Everything over eight hours a night was time-and-a-half, so I typically worked twelve hours a night. In addition, on Friday I would sometimes work straight through until Saturday at noon--a total of eighteen hours. But even though I averaged over seventy hours a week at the plant, I still didn't take home much more than $100. Some workers held out hope that at Christmas we would receive a bonus check that would compensate for our low hourly wage. In fact, our holiday reward turned out to be a specially wrapped 1-gallon jug of apple cider that I'm sure the management regarded as a generous gift.

Topic sentence (Point 3)

But even more than the low pay, what upset me about my apple plant job were the working conditions. I had no shared interests with the man I loaded cartons with, and thus had to work without job companionship. Our humorless supervisor cared only about his production record for each night, and tried to keep the assembly line moving at a breakneck pace. During work I was limited to two 10-minute breaks and an unpaid half-hour for lunch. Most of my time was spent outside on the truck loading dock in near-zero-degree temperatures. The steel floors of the trucks were like ice.

the quickly penetrating cold made my feet feel like stone. But conditions were most dismal at 4:30 in the morning when I cleaned the apple vats. The vats were old gasoline truck bodies with a small, single porthole entrance. I had to crawl in headfirst, while wearing hip-length boots and holding a can of cleanser, a brush, and a thick hose that gushed cold water. The floor of the vat was rounded and slippery with apple residue, and the vat was too low for me to stand upright. In a hunched position, in the dim light that came from the porthole, I had to inch my way to the back of the cylinder and then bend over and start scrubbing away the apple residue. I was wet, cold, and exhausted, and in my bent-over position at the rear of that eerie isolation chamber, I felt humiliated and alone. I felt humiliated by the poverty that forced me to do such degrading work; I felt alone because in the deep silence of the vat, I was always reminded that I had no person outside with whom I could share my life. The vat was an ugly place to be at 4:30 on a cold, lonely winter morning, and the job was a bitter one to have.

I stayed on the job for five months, hating all the while the difficulty of the work, the poor money, and the conditions under which I worked. Then the apple season ended, and I had saved enough money to return to school. While the job left me with harsh memories and a lifelong aversion to apple juice, it had one positive effect. It increased my resolve to get some kind of specialized education so that I would never again have to work at such a degrading job.

Summary

Conclusion

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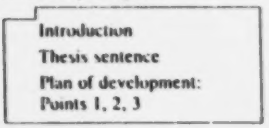

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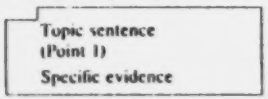

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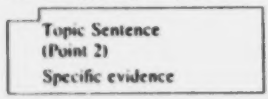
Second Supporting Paragraph



The *topic sentence* advances the second supporting point for the thesis, and the *specific evidence* in the rest of the paragraph develops that second point.

Third Supporting Paragraph

Topic sentence (Point 3) Specific evidence

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Summary

Conclusion

BING AND ELVIS

Russell Baker

Russell Baker writes a syndicated column for The New York Times *for which he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1979. In the following selection, which first appeared in the* Times *shortly after Bing Crosby's death in 1977, Baker compares and contrasts two of our most popular entertainers and in the process tells us something about the generations that produced them.*

The grieving for Elvis Presley and the commercial exploitation of his death were still not ended when we heard of Bing Crosby's death the other day. Here is a generational puzzle. Those of an age to mourn Elvis must marvel that their elders could really have cared about Bing, just as the Crosby generation a few weeks ago wondered what all the to-do was about when Elvis died. 1

Each man was a mass culture hero to his generation, but it tells us something of the difference between generations that each man's admirers would be hard-pressed to understand why the other could mean very much to his devotees. 2

There were similarities that ought to tell us something. Both came from obscurity to national recognition while quite young and became very rich. Both lacked formal music education and went on to movie careers despite lack of acting skills. Both developed distinctive musical styles which were originally scorned by critics and subsequently studied as pioneer developments in the art of popular song. 3

In short, each man's career followed the mythic rags-to-triumph pattern in which adversity is conquered, detractors are given their comeuppance and estates, fancy cars and world tours become the reward of perseverance. Traditionally this was supposed to be the history of the American 4

business striver, but in our era of committee capitalism it occurs most often in the mass entertainment field, and so we look less and less to the board room for our heroes and more and more to the microphone.

Both Crosby and Presley were creations of the microphone. It made it possible for people with frail voices not only to be heard beyond the third row but also to caress millions. Crosby was among the first to understand that the microphone made it possible to sing to multitudes by singing to a single person in a small room. 5

Presley cuddled his microphone like a lover. With Crosby the microphone was usually concealed, but Presley brought it out on stage, detached it from its fitting, stroked it, pressed it to his mouth. It was a surrogate for his listener, and he made love to it unashamedly. 6

The difference between Presley and Crosby, however, reflected generational differences which spoke of changing values in American life. Crosby's music was soothing; Presley's was disturbing. It is too easy to be glib about this, to say that Crosby was singing to, first, Depression America and, then, to wartime America, and that his audience had all the disturbance they could handle in their daily lives without buying more at the record shop and movie theater. 7

Crosby's fans talk about how "relaxed" he was, how "natural," how "casual and easy going." By the time Presley began causing sensations, the entire country had become relaxed, casual and easy going, and its younger people seemed to be tired of it, for Elvis's act was anything but soothing and scarcely what a parent of that placid age would have called "natural" for a young man. 8

Elvis was unseemly, loud, gaudy, sexual—that gyrating pelvis!—in short, disturbing. He not only disturbed parents who thought music by Crosby was soothing but also reminded their young that they were full of the turmoil of youth and an appetite for excitement. At a time when the country had a population coming of age with no memory of troubled times, Presley spoke to a yearning for disturbance. 9

It probably helped that Elvis's music made Mom and Dad climb the wall. In any case, people who admired Elvis never 10

talk about how relaxed and easy going he made them feel. They are more likely to tell you he introduced them to something new and exciting.

To explain each man in terms of changes in economic and political life probably oversimplifies the matter. Something in the culture was also changing. Crosby's music, for example, paid great attention to the importance of lyrics. The "message" of the song was as essential to the audience as the tune. The words were usually inane and witless, but Crosby—like Sinatra a little later—made them vital. People remembered them, sang them. Words still had meaning. 11

Although many of Presley's songs were highly lyrical, in most it wasn't the words that moved audiences; it was the "sound." Rock 'n' roll, of which he was the great popularizer, was a "sound" event. Song stopped being song and turned into "sound," at least until the Beatles came along and solved the problem of making words sing to the new beat. 12

Thus a group like the Rolling Stones, whose lyrics are often elaborate, seems to the Crosby-tuned ear to be shouting only gibberish, a sort of accompanying background noise in a "sound" experience. The Crosby generation has trouble hearing rock because it makes the mistake of trying to understand the words. The Presley generation has trouble with Crosby because it finds the sound unstimulating and cannot be touched by the inanity of the words. The mutual deafness may be a measure of how far we have come from really troubled times and of how deeply we have come to mistrust the value of words. 13

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What similarities between Crosby and Presley does Russell Baker see? What differences does he see? Why does he consider the similarities between these two singers before considering their differences?
2. What conclusion does Baker draw from his comparison and contrast of the two entertainers?

3. Does Baker use a point-by-point or a subject-by-subject pattern of organization in his essay? Why is the pattern that he uses particularly effective for the subject matter?
4. Though the tone in Baker's essay is serious and reflective, it remains basically informal. Identify specific words that help to establish this tone. (Glossary: *Tone*)

Vocabulary

Refer to your dictionary to define the following words as they are used in this selection. Then use each word in a sentence of your own.

mythic (4)	glib (7)
adversity (4)	placid (8)
surrogate (6)	inane (11)

Suggested Writing Assignment

Select one of the following topics for an essay of comparison and contrast. In selecting a topic you should consider (1) what your purpose will be, (2) whether you will emphasize similarities or differences, (3) what specific points you will discuss, and (4) what organizational pattern will best suit your purpose.

two cities
two friends
two restaurants
two actors or actresses
two popular music groups
two mountains

Jack Newfield

Jack Newfield is a tough-minded political and social columnist, a self-described muckraker. He was born in 1939 in Brooklyn, New York, grew up there, and graduated in 1961 from Hunter College in Manhattan. He entered journalism as a copy-boy at The New York Mirror, *became an editor at the weekly* West Side News, *and ended up, in 1964, at the New York paper* The Village Voice. *More than two decades later, Newfield is now a senior editor at* The Voice, *contributing investigative reports on local issues ranging from arson to boxing corruption to mayoral races. Nineteen of his columns for* The Voice *were collected in* The Education of Jack Newfield *(1984). He has also written for other periodicals, including* The Nation, Partisan Review, *and* Evergreen Review. *And he has published six other books, among them* Robert Kennedy: A Memoir *(1969) and* The Permanent Government: Who Really Rules New York? *(with Paul du Brul; revised in 1981). "I'm writing to erase an injustice, to expose a crooked politician, to force a landlord to improve a building," Newfield has said. "I'm writing to have an effect."*

Stallone vs. Springsteen

Unlike many other entertainers, the movie actor Sylvester Stallone and the rock musician Bruce Springsteen seem to represent and appeal to fundamental American values. But, Newfield argues in this comparison, they do not appeal to the same values. Subtitled "Which Dream Do You Buy?" the essay first appeared in Playboy *magazine in 1986.*

Bruce Springsteen and Sylvester Stallone are the two great working- 1
class heroes of American mass culture. Springsteen had the best-selling album of 1985 and Stallone has the second most successful movie. On the surface, they share stunning similarities of biceps, bandannas, American flags, Vietnam themes, praise from President Reagan and uplifting feelings of national pride. Bumper stickers proclaim, BRUCE—THE RAMBO OF ROCK.

But beneath the surface—and between the lines—these two Amer- 2
ican heroes of the eighties are sending opposite messages. They are subtly pulling the 18-to-35-year-old generation toward two competing visions of the American future.

Stallone's *Rocky* and *Rambo* films—especially the latter—are 3
about violence and revenge in a context of fantasy. Rambo never pays

a price in body bags or pain or blood or doubt or remorse or fear. The enemy is stereotyped and therefore dehumanized. The emotions Stallone liberates are hostility and aggression: Audiences come out of the theater wanting to kick some Commie ass in Nicaragua.

By contrast, the essential human feeling Springsteen liberates is 4
empathy—compassion for the common man trapped in the dead-end world of the hourly wage. The realistic words of Springsteen's best songs are about the hurt of unemployed workers; about reconciliation with estranged parents through understanding *their* lives; about staying hopeful even though experience falls short of the American dream.

In *Rambo* Stallone depicts the Vietnam veteran as a killing 5
machine, a deranged, rampaging executioner. In "Born in the U.S.A.," Springsteen depicts the Vietnam veteran as neglected—wanting to be reintegrated into society as a normal person but getting the brush-off from a bureaucrat at the Veterans Administration. Recall the misunderstood and misheard words of the Springsteen anthem:

> Got in a little hometown jam,
> So they put a rifle in my hand.
> Sent me off to a foreign land
> To go and kill the yellow man. . . .
> Come back home to the refinery.
> Hiring man says, "Son, if it was up to me. . . ."
> Went down to see my VA man;
> He said, "Son, don't you understand now?"
> I had a brother at Khé Sanh
> Fighting off the Viet Cong.
> They're still there; he's all gone.
> He had a woman he loved in Saigon—
> I got a picture of him in her arms now. . . .

The difference between Stallone and Springsteen is perhaps best 6
illuminated by reading an essay George Orwell wrote in 1945, before either Stallone or Springsteen was born. In the essay, "Notes on Nationalism," Orwell makes a distinction between nationalism and patriotism and then suggests that they are, in fact, opposites.

> By "nationalism" I mean first of all the habit of assuming that human beings can be classified like insects and that whole blocks of millions or tens of millions of people can confidently be labeled "good" or "bad." But secondly—and this is much more important—I mean the habit of identifying oneself with a single nation or other unit, placing it beyond good and evil and recognizing no other duty than that of advancing its

> interests. Nationalism is not to be confused with patriotism . . . since two different and even opposing ideas are involved. By "patriotism" I mean a devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force upon other people. Patriotism is of its nature defensive, both militarily and culturally. Nationalism, on the other hand, is inseparable from the desire for power. . . .
>
> It can plausibly be argued, for instance—it is even probably true—that patriotism is an inoculation against nationalism.

Stallone as Rambo snarls, "Damn Russian bastards" and kills a few more. Springsteen introduces "This Land Is Your Land," the first encore at all his concerts, as "the greatest song ever written about America," and then reminds his fans, "Remember, *nobody wins unless everybody wins.*" That's one difference between nationalism and patriotism. 7

Stallone manipulates American's feelings of frustration over the lost Vietnam war and helps create a jingoistic climate of emotion in which a future war might be welcomed. Springsteen asks us to honor the neglected and rejected Vietnam veterans, so that we won't glide gleefully into the next war without remembering the real cost of the last one. That's a second difference between nationalism and patriotism. 8

"It's a right-wing fantasy," said Stallone, talking to *Time* about last summer's big hit. "What Rambo is saying is that if they could fight again, it would be different." He added that he was looking for another "open wound" as a site for a sequel, possibly Iran or Afghanistan. 9

Ron Kovic is a paraplegic author and Vietnam veteran. As an honored guest at Springsteen's opening-night concert last August at the Giants' stadium in New Jersey, Kovic told reporters, "I've been sitting in this wheelchair for the past 18 years. And I can only thank Bruce Springsteen for all he has done for Vietnam veterans. 'Born in the U.S.A.' is a beautiful song that helped me personally to heal." The difference between looking for another open wound as a movie backdrop and creating music that is healing—that's a third distinction between nationalism and patriotism. . . . 10

Nationalism, as defined by Orwell, is an intoxicating but essentially negative emotion, because it is, by its very nature, intolerant. It does not respect the rights of minorities or the dignity of neighbors. It is a will to power that negates complexity. Its most extreme avatars 11

are monstrous lunatics such as Khomeini, Qaddafi, Botha, Farrankhan and Kahane.

The milder form of nationalism, as represented by Stallone, is less 12
harmful. Stallone doesn't have Governmental power, and he doesn't push the issue, he usually retreats behind his movie character and tells most interviewers he is nonpolitical.

But the messages his images communicate to masses of impres- 13
sionable young people sometimes do have damaging consequences. For example, the week *Rambo*, with its negative stereotypes of Asians, opened in Boston last spring, there were two incidents in which Southeast Asian refugees were badly beaten up by gangs of white youths.

In the more recent *Rocky IV*—which Stallone wrote, directed and 14
starred in—the villainous foe is a Russian who fights dirty, takes illegal steroid injections and wears a black mouthpiece. Cleverly named Ivan Drago, he is depicted as a robotlike extension of the Evil Empire. Critics have written that it is the most simplistic and one-dimensional of all the *Rocky* movies. It lacks the interesting subplots and realistic blue-collar atmosphere of the original *Rocky*, with its loan shark and neighborhood gym; this time, Stallone literally and figuratively wraps himself in the American flag—proving that sequels are the last refuge of nationalists.

The worst features of Stallone's nationalism are the values it 15
enshrines and reinforces: racism, violence, militarism and—possibly most subversive of all—simplicity. The convergence of these emotions can make war and foreign intervention seem like a sporting event. Or a movie.

Bruce Springsteen's patriotism is rooted in a different set of values, 16
apparent in his songs: the old-fashioned virtues of work, family, community, loyalty, dignity, perseverance, love of country. His fundamental theme is the gap between America's promise and performance and his resilient faith in the eventual redemption of that promise. He sees America as it is, with all its jobless veterans, homeless people and urban ghettos. And he retains his idealism *in spite of everything*, because his patriotism has room for paradox. At a Springsteen concert, one song makes you want to cheer for America, the next makes you want to cry for America—and then change it.

Springsteen conveys compassion for the casualty, for the ordinary 17
person who may not be articulate. His empathy is for men with "debts no honest man can pay." From his immense pride in his home town comes a homage to closed textile mills and "Main Street's white-

washed windows and vacant stores." Out of his populist patriotism comes his affection for people who feel "like a dog that's been beat too much" and his reconciling respect for his working-class father:

> Daddy worked his whole life for nothing but the pain.
> Now he walks up these empty rooms, looking for something to blame.

These songs are social, not political. They don't offer platforms, 18
slogans or rhetoric. They don't imply easy remedies and they don't endorse politicians. Springsteen himself says he has not voted since 1972, and he is enrolled in no political party. . . .

Springsteen and Stallone, two messiahs of American mass culture, 19
two muscular men—tugging this country's flag in different directions.

Sylvester Stallone, at bottom, is a faker, feeding us fantasies as 20
therapy for our national neuroses. He is appealing to the dark side that exists in all of us, the part of us that wants to get even with everyone who has ever gotten the better of us, the part that finds it easier to understand a stereotype than an individual, the part that dreams of vengeance that never fails and never leaves an aftertaste of guilt.

Bruce Springsteen appeals to the best in all of us. His songs ask us 21
to forgive the sinner but to remember the sin; to respect one another but to question authority; to refuse to compromise our ideals ("no retreat, no surrender"); to keep growing but to continue to love our parents and our home towns; to feel a responsibility for sharing with our countrymen who have less property and less power.

"I think what's happening now," Springsteen told one inter- 22
viewer, "is people want to forget. There was Vietnam, there was Watergate, there was Iran—we were beaten, we were hustled and then we were humiliated. And I think people got a need to feel good about the country they live in. But what's happening, I think, is that need—which is a good thing—is gettin' manipulated and exploited. . . .

"One of the things that was always on my mind was to maintain 23
connections with the people I'd grown up with and the sense of community where I came from. That's why I stayed in New Jersey. The danger of fame is in *forgetting*."

Meaning

1. Newfield states his thesis at the end of paragraph 2: "[Stallone and Springsteen] are subtly pulling the 18-to-35-year-old generation toward

two competing visions of the American future." Locate the places in the essay where Newfield most directly states the fundamental differences in what the two "working-class heroes" represent. Then summarize these fundamental differences in your own words.

2. To help him make his own comparison, Newfield borrows another comparison made by George Orwell (paragraph 6). Why is Orwell's distinction between *patriotism* and *nationalism* particularly appropriate for illuminating the differences between Stallone and Springsteen?
3. What does Newfield mean by his claim that simplicity is "possibly the most subversive [value] of all" (paragraph 15)? What is he warning against here?
4. If you do not know the meanings of the following words, look them up in a dictionary: stereotyped (paragraph 3); empathy, reconciliation (4); plausibly (6); jingoistic (8); paraplegic (10); avatars (11); steroid (14); convergence (15); resilient, paradox (16); homage, populist (17); neuroses (20).

Purpose and Audience

1. To what extent is Newfield's purpose to help us better understand Stallone or Springsteen or both? To what extent is his purpose to evaluate the two and express a preference for one over the other?
2. This essay originally appeared in *Playboy*. From that information and from what Newfield says, what do you think he expected his readers' attitudes to be toward Stallone and Springsteen? Was he hoping to change their attitudes? Did he change your attitude? Why, or why not?

Method and Structure

1. To see how Newfield organizes his comparison, make a rough outline of the points he covers after the introduction—from paragraph 3 on. Which parts of the essay are developed point-by-point, and which subject-by-subject? Why do you think Newfield uses a subject-by-subject organization for part of his essay?
2. To help make his comparison clear and coherent, Newfield relies on echoes between sentences and paragraphs. For instance, "The emotions Stallone liberates are hostility and aggression" (paragraph 3) echoes in "By contrast, the essential human feeling Springsteen liberates is empathy" (4). Locate three or four other echoes to see how they tie together the elements of Newfield's essay.

3. **Other Methods** In developing his comparison, Newfield uses several other methods, most notably example (Chapter 3) and definition (Chapter 8). These two methods are themselves combined in paragraphs 6–10, where Newfield quotes George Orwell's definitions of *nationalism* and *patriotism* and adds the paired examples of Stallone and Springsteen. What do Newfield's examples add to Orwell's definitions?

Language

1. Clearly, Newfield is expressing his own opinions and feelings in this essay. Why, then, does he avoid using *I*? What does he gain by avoiding it?
2. Examine the words Newfield uses in paragraphs 3–5 to describe Stallone and Springsteen. What do their connotations reveal about Newfield's views of the two entertainers? Why do you think Newfield conveys these views so strongly so early in the essay? (Consult the Glossary if you need a definition of *connotation*.)
3. In his final contrast between Stallone and Springsteen (paragraphs 20–21), Newfield uses two long sentences whose structures are both parallel. That is, the parts of each sentence are expressed in similar grammatical form: "the part of us that wants . . . , the part that finds . . . , the part that dreams . . . " (20); "to forgive . . . , to respect . . . , to keep growing . . . to contribute . . . , to feel . . . " (21). What does this parallelism contribute to this part of the essay? (If necessary, consult the Glossary for a fuller definition of *parallelism*.)

Writing Topics

1. You may like Sylvester Stallone's movies, whatever Jack Newfield says about them. If so, write a defense of them, responding with examples and details of your own to Newfield's specific points.
2. Newfield accuses Stallone of "feeding us fantasies as therapy for our national neuroses" (paragraph 20). Think of film fantasies that, in contrast to Stallone's, could provide nondestructive, even helpful, therapy—those in the *Star Wars* films or in *E. T.*, for instance. Write an essay contrasting the values represented by the film(s) you choose with those represented by Stallone's films as outlined by Newfield.
3. Do you agree that Springsteen and Stallone are "two American heroes" (paragraph 2)? What is a hero? Write an essay defining the hero of the 1980s, using examples to support your definition. You may want to

89 vengeful — desiring to punish another for an injury or wrongful act

Essay Preview: Questions to Answer as You Read

1. According to Holt, what three kinds of discipline do children learn from?
2. What is one example that Holt gives to illustrate the first kind? the second? the third?
3. What is one danger in applying the third kind of discipline?

Three Disciplines for Children

1 A child, in growing up, may meet and learn from three different kinds of disciplines. The first and most important is what we might call the Discipline of Nature or of Reality. When he is trying to do something real, if he does the wrong thing or doesn't do the right one, he doesn't get the result he wants. If he doesn't pile one block right on top of another, or tries to build on a slanting surface, his tower falls down. If he hits the wrong key, he hears the wrong note. If he doesn't hit the nail squarely on the head, it bends, and he has to pull it out and start with another. If he doesn't measure properly what he is trying to build, it won't open, close, fit, stand up, fly, float, whistle, or do whatever he wants it to do. If he closes his eyes when he swings, he doesn't hit the ball. A child meets this kind of discipline every time he tries to *do* something, which is why it is so important in school to give children more chances to do things, instead of just reading or listening to someone talk (or pretending to). This discipline is a great teacher. The learner never has to wait long for his answer; it usually comes quickly, often instantly. Also it is clear, and very often points toward the needed correction; from what happened he can not only see that what he did was wrong, but also why, and what he needs to do instead. Finally, and most important, the giver of the answer, call it Nature, is impersonal, impartial, and indifferent. She does

not give opinions, or make judgments; she cannot be wheedled, bullied, or fooled; she does not get angry or disappointed; she does not praise or blame; she does not remember past failures or hold grudges; with her one always gets a fresh start, this time is the one that counts.

2 The next discipline we might call the Discipline of Culture, of Society, of What People Really Do. Man is a social, a cultural animal. Children sense around them this culture, this network of agreements, customs, habits, and rules binding the adults together. They want to understand it and be a part of it. They watch very carefully what people around them are doing and want to do the same. They want to do right, unless they become convinced they can't do right. Thus children rarely misbehave seriously in church, but sit as quietly as they can. The example of all those grownups is contagious. Some mysterious ritual is going on, and children, who like rituals, want to be part of it. In the same way, the little children that I see at concerts or operas, though they may fidget a little, or perhaps take a nap now and then, rarely make any disturbance. With all those grownups sitting there, neither moving nor talking, it is the most natural thing in the world to imitate them. Children who live among adults who are habitually courteous to each other, and to them, will soon learn to be courteous. Children who live surrounded by people who speak a certain way will speak that way, however much we may try to tell them that speaking that way is bad or wrong.

3 The third discipline is the one most people mean when they speak of discipline—the Discipline of Superior Force, of sergeant to private, of "you do what I tell you or I'll make you wish you had." There is bound to be some of this in a child's life. Living as we do surrounded by things that can hurt children, or that children can hurt, we cannot avoid it. We can't afford to let a small child find out from experience the danger of playing in a busy street, or of fooling with the pots on the top of a stove, or of eating up the pills in the medicine cabinet. So, along with other precautions, we say to him, "Don't play in the street, or touch things on the stove, or go into the medicine cabinet, or I'll punish you." Between him and the danger too great for him to imagine we put a lesser danger, but one he can imagine and maybe therefore

want to avoid. He can have no idea of what it would be like to be hit by a car, but he can imagine being shouted at, or spanked, or sent to his room. He avoids these substitutes for the greater danger until he can understand it and avoid it for its own sake. But we ought to use this discipline only when it is necessary to protect the life, health, safety, or well-being of people or other living creatures, or to prevent destruction of things that people care about. We ought not to assume too long, as we usually do, that a child cannot understand the real nature of the danger from which we want to protect him. The sooner he avoids the danger, not to escape our punishment, but as a matter of good sense, the better. He can learn that faster than we think. In Mexico, for example, where people drive their cars with a good deal of spirit, I saw many children no older than five or four walking unattended on the streets. They understood about cars, they knew what to do. A child whose life is full of the threat and fear of punishment is locked into babyhood. There is no way for him to grow up, to learn to take responsibility for his life and acts. Most important of all, we should not assume that having to yield to the threat of our superior force is good for the child's character. It is never good for *anyone's* character. To bow to superior force makes us feel impotent and cowardly for not having had the strength or courage to resist. Worse, it makes us resentful and vengeful. We can hardly wait to make someone pay for our humiliation, yield to us as we were once made to yield. No, if we cannot always avoid using the Discipline of Superior Force, we should at least use it as seldom as we can.

Questions for Discussion

1. Holt's essay has a very simple structure. *Complete the following outline by naming the topic of each paragraph:*

   I. Discipline 1: _____
   II. Discipline 2: _____
   III. Discipline 3: _____

2. *Holt's thesis is obviously and clearly stated in the first sentence. Which part of this sentence tells the subject of the essay?*

Besides stating the subject, the first sentence makes an assertion about the subject. That is, it makes the point—tells what's important—about the three kinds of disciplines. *What is Holt's point?*

What is important about discipline in this essay, and hence the author's reason for writing about it, is that growing children learn from these three kinds. A thesis statement that makes an assertion, or point, is preferable in essay writing to a simple statement of subject, like "The purpose of this essay is to describe three kinds of disciplines."

3. Holt's essay consists of three long paragraphs, each a model of what a paragraph should be. Each focuses on a single aspect of the subject, deals completely with that aspect of the subject, and is clearly related to the essay as a whole. We thus say that it is (a) unified, (b) complete, and (c) coherent.

Notice that paragraph 1, after the thesis, begins:

> The first and most important is what we might call the Discipline of Nature or of Reality.

This is Holt's *topic sentence*, so-called because it names the topic of the paragraph, for throughout the paragraph Holt discusses only this kind of discipline. Thus the paragraph is *unified*. We might say the discussion is *complete* too, because Holt adequately explains that aspect of his subject and doesn't come back to it in another paragraph. And finally, through a second function of the topic sentence, the paragraph also is clearly linked to the thesis sentence; it is *coherent*. The words "The first and most important" and the repetition of the key word *discipline* relate this paragraph to the thesis.

Find the topic sentences of the next two paragraphs and identify the topics plus the words that relate these paragraphs to the thesis.

4. *For what audience is Holt writing this classification of kinds of discipline? Consider lines 15–17, 57–62, and others that you think apply.*

While paragraph 1 mentions school and advises what should be happening in the classroom, paragraph 3 is

VICKI WHITE

A student, Vicki White, wrote this essay to discuss solutions to the problems at Dettmers' Greenery, the plant store where she worked. Although she wrote this essay as an assignment to be read aloud in her Freshman English class, she used her real-life situation, an employee making a report to her boss, as the background for her paper.

Solving the Problem at Dettmers' Greenery

1 Last week while making out my annual report, I noticed something that has been happening so gradually that I hadn't noticed it before. Over the past year Dettmers' Greenery has been slowly losing business. Each quarter there has been a slight decline. I have taken out time to consider seriously this problem, and I have isolated two factors which I believe explain the loss. These two factors are our low plant sales and the improperly budgeted time of the staff. I have, therefore, several suggestions which could help the company if they are put into action.

2 The first and major concern involves raising the plant sales. These sales have dropped unnecessarily almost 20 percent over the past twelve months. I believe that by underselling certain produce, the greenery would profit in the long run. This would involve a series of special sales offered to our customers on a regular basis.

3 One such sale would be a "White Elephant Sale." In this sale we would separate all of the good plants from the damaged plants and offer the damaged ones at a discount. This would allow the customers to buy the plants they wanted (although slightly damaged) at a very low cost. Dettmers' Greenery, on the other hand, would save money by selling these plants instead of throwing them away, as has been done in the past.

4 A second sale would be the "Plant of the Month" sale. For this sale, a plant would be picked each month to be Plant of the Month. This plant would then be purchased through our wholesalers in mass quantity, resulting in a low price for us. We, in turn, could sell these plants at a reasonably low rate and still increase our income.

5 My last suggestion for raising sales would to be offer a 10 percent discount to our regular customers. For example, last week while visiting the annex store of Dettmers', I ran into one such customer, Miss Schwarer. She comes in on a weekly basis and usually buys a good supply of merchandise. By offering customers such as Miss Schwarer a

"club discount" of 10 percent, we could continue to expect to have her business on a regular—and probably an increased—basis. And as these customers' buying increased, the extra business would overbalance any loss resulting from the discount.

Increased plant sales, however, will not solve our problem at Dett- 6
mers'. The staff's use of time must also be studied if we are to return to our healthy financial condition. One problem that arises frequently, and one that wastes an enormous amount of time, is the staff's failure to mark the prices of plants before they are put out to be sold. In the past, plants have been put out and then marked, often resulting in no prices being put on at all because the salesperson forgot to return to do the job. I recall many times when a customer has brought a plant to the cash register to buy it; nobody can find a price and nobody there at that time knows the price. The customer is irritated (sometimes to the point of leaving the plant and walking out of the store), and the staff is frustrated. This problem could be solved easily by a firm policy that *no* plant is to be put on the floor until its price has been marked.

Another way the staff time is wasted is in the decoration of pots. It 7
takes more time than is recovered in the price of the flower to cover a pot neatly in colored foil and then tie a ribbon around it or add some other type of decoration. A lot of time could be saved if the company would invest in prefabricated baskets of various styles that the plants could be put directly into without further decoration. Although this would amount to more expense for the company initially, perhaps, the time savings of the staff would, in the long run, outweigh the expense. If hand-decorated pots were still used, they should be offered at an additional cost.

The last suggestion concerning the use of the staff's time most 8
efficiently has to do with the assignment of duties to the employees. Just a short while back, when I was visiting our branch stores in the two new shopping centers in town, I noticed that the staff's schedules were in chaos. Both stores had been rotating daily the duties of spraying, watering, and feeding the plants. And at least once a week there was confusion on whose turn it was to feed the plants or give them their spraying, etc. This confusion results often in one of these jobs not getting done and perhaps another of the jobs being done twice in the same day by two different people, one of whom forgot what the exact assignment was for that day. This problem can be avoided by assigning each employee a specific duty, an allotted time to do it, and posting a chart stating each worker's duty. Then, if the plants are neglected, the problem can be pin-pointed very easily.

I have put much time and effort into both of the problems discussed 9
here. If my proposals for solutions are put into action, the company will profit greatly. Not only will the earnings increase from the plant

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sales, but much time will also be saved. Since time is money, this improved budgeting of staff time will also improve the profits of Dettmers' Greenery. Very likely the company would realize the benefits of these changes as soon as the very next quarterly report.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. How many suggestions does Vicki White use to state the solution to the problem at Dettmer's Greenery?
2. Each suggestion she makes has one main sentence that states exactly what the suggestion is. What is the value of the rest of the sentences in each suggestion paragraph? What do these other sentences provide for the reader—and for the writer?
3. What is the ratio in this essay of the statement of the problem to the statement of the solution?
4. What determines the order in which Vicki White lists her suggestions for solving the problem?
5. How does the writer make her own "voice" heard in the essay? What is added specifically because of the presence of that voice?

MARGARET MEAD

Margaret Mead (1901–1978), the anthropologist, discusses solutions to the problem of illiteracy in this essay, which appeared in Redbook *magazine in 1976.* Redbook *is aimed at parents, the primary audience for this essay on teaching children to read and write.*

How We Can Help Children Learn to Write

1 Children *can* be taught to read and write, and to do both with some measure of ease and competence. In spite of all the evidence today to the contrary, that is one thing we must keep in mind. Now more than ever before, the ability to understand what others have written and to express oneself clearly are necessary adult skills. They are skills no one is born with and that everyone who is to become literate must learn.

2 Given a chance, children can learn to use words exactly and vividly to write about the world they are so busy discovering, as well as to express their thoughts and feelings. They can learn how to tell a story, how to describe accurately an event they have watched or taken part in, how to give directions to another person who wants to go somewhere or make something, how to organize an argument, and how to share with others their moods of pleased excitement, anger, fright and happiness. This much is within the reach not of just a few especially talented or privileged children but of every child—or it should be. Given a proper chance to learn how to write, children can even learn to enjoy the process of discovering how to communicate more and more meaningfully.

3 An English philosopher, R. G. Collingwood, once said that you cannot fully know what the poem you are writing is about until you have finished writing it. It is equally true, I think, that you cannot fully know your own thought until you have succeeded in expressing it clearly, either orally or by writing it down. Learning to use words is not only a way of reaching out to others; it is also a way of finding yourself.

4 But the evidence cannot be dodged. Our children are not becoming competently literate. Great numbers of elementary-school children fail to grasp the basic elements of reading and writing and each year fall further behind. The majority of adolescents are incapable of expressing themselves in good, clear English. And the average adult has little confidence in her own ability to read rapidly and with understanding.

to conceptualize what she wants to say and to say readily what she has in mind.

The facts are well known. The question is what we are to do. 5

First of all, I believe, we must scrap most of the current theories as 6
to why our children are not learning. They are simply poor excuses for our own failures. It is said, for example, that television is so attractive to children that it is keeping them from reading. But watching television—for reasonable periods of time and with some attention paid by parents to the quality of the programs—is at least as useful in learning to read as the same number of hours spent roller skating or playing ball. It is certainly true that many children would benefit by more active play out of doors—but this would not turn them into readers. Just because children learned to read in the past does not mean that they spent all their free time reading or keeping diaries or writing stories. For one child who was a delighted bookworm or a precocious author, there were thousands who read no further than their school lessons required. But it is also true that children today who do learn to read and write do not treat television as their *only* resource.

We must also realize the pernicious effect on almost everyone of our 7
continually rising anxiety about our children's education. Two generations ago the young adult who for some reason had not learned to read and write English could still get a job. Today this is not so; the illiterate person is a social cripple. And as we have raised our standards our ability to teach the necessary skills has diminished.

This is not the paradox it seems. For high standards can be used, not 8
only to increase care and to provide timely warnings about things that may be going wrong, but also to frighten people with the specter of failure. And anxiety of this kind is paralyzing both to parents, who fear for their children's future, and to teachers in school systems where no one suggests workable remedies. In the end, of course, this adult anxiety paralyzes the children most of all, and they cannot learn.

Concern is legitimate in some cases. Parents and teachers must be 9
alert to the needs of handicapped children and the special kinds of help they must have. But what I am speaking of here is the vague, unplaced worry that is extended to all children and that serves only to aggravate the difficulties along the way without providing remedies. In many schools, teachers, uncertain about the effectiveness of their methods, discourage any efforts made by parents—even though we know that the best way for a child to learn basic literacy is in the natural, everyday give-and-take with literate parents who are close to each child's interests and learning habits. Deprived of help, healthy children become handicapped, deprived of the ability to learn through no lack or failure of their own.

The children of illiterate parents need more help, and in the past we 10
used to give it to many of them. And elsewhere in the world today, in

new countries and postrevolutionary countries, whole adult populations have become literate almost overnight—because educational planners and teachers and students alike believed in the importance of reading and writing and had no doubt that these skills could be put within everyone's reach.

11 In our own country, in fact, during World War II, we had a splendid literacy program in the armed forces that was designed, not by educators who had given up on half the children it was their responsibility to teach, but by highly sophisticated people who respected their students as adults interested in adult things, who happened not to have learned to read and write but were perfectly capable of doing so. And they learned. Somehow we have forgotten what we have done and have not observed what others are doing.

12 Our most immediate task, then, is to change the level of our expectations. Instead of indulging in worry that carries with it the expectation of failure—and our contempt for those who fail—we must be convinced that what other children have done and are doing, all our children can do. We must establish a nationwide expectation that *all* children can and will be taught to be literate. And we must not be deterred by educators' quarrels over the methods of teaching or by shibboleths about such things as the McGuffey Readers or the dangers of permissiveness. Children have learned to read by being beaten—and also by learning their letters from cookies coated with honey. As long as the society—and so the teachers and parents—expect children to be able to learn, they will learn.

13 It is when that expectation falters, when a society believes that any group of children is incapable of learning—whether they are physically handicapped or the children of mountain people, whether they come from rural or urban slums or are Black or foreign-speaking, whether they are barefooted, or girls, or twitchy and unused to sitting still—then such children will become "social dyslectics," children who suffer from an impairment in the ability to learn to read that is social in origin.

14 Expectations have to change equally in the minds of educated, anxious parents who have accepted uncritically their children's failure to learn for complex psychiatric reasons. As I began by saying, we must keep firmly in mind that children *can* learn to read and write.

15 Our second task is to recognize the fact that education is costly as we now define it in a very complex world. And it is costly as it applies not only to beginners but also to all those in search of higher education—indeed, to everyone who wants to learn. There are those who say we should not raise our level of expectations until we are ready to pay for what we will need. Certainly the two go together. But on the whole, Americans are willing to commit themselves only to working hard for and spending money (especially tax money) on activities they accept as necessary and good and likely to succeed.

And in making plans for education and budgets to implement those plans, we must provide not only for children, adolescents and college students, but also for adults who want to advance and for the drop-outs—the neglected, the deprived and the damaged—who want to enter the mainstream of living. As Americans we have never believed in penalizing people for their past, and any plan we make and advocate broadly must take into account those who have suffered. Today we have a vast number of parents who have been marred by the experience of their schooling. If we do not realistically give them a chance, we shall endanger the chances of their children, and so the well-being of still another generation. 16

But what about time? What about *my* children—now? Isn't there something we can begin to do now, immediately, for the children who are already in school and the still smaller ones who will come streaming into schools next spring and next fall? This is a legitimate demand. For every child, childhood happens only once and is always now. 17

There is, of course, a great deal we can do—parents and teachers and everyone involved in the teaching side of the educational process. We can begin by drawing on what we know worked in the past and adapt it intelligently to the kind of children we hope, at best, to bring up for tomorrow's world. 18

And we are not without help in the matter. Here and there in the country some children—a few—*are* learning to use their language very well. They are learning to write correctly and much more individually than the best-taught children did in the past. And there are teachers—not only very young teachers, and many more than we know about—who are struggling successfully with the problems of how to teach children the kind of literacy they will need and can take pride in as they are learning it. I have talked with some of these teachers and I have read some of the lively and interesting work that their pupils are producing. 19

One thing we have to realize is that the ability to read and to comprehend the meaning of written material does not give a child proficiency in writing. It is true that reading and writing are linked tightly together, so that unless a child understands that someone has written the words she is asked to read, and learns to write those words herself, reading remains a kind of mumbo jumbo. The child needs to see the teacher (or the parent as teacher) write the words that the child then reads. And then the child herself must write what she has read. 20

And she needs to practice writing all the time in order to begin to do it well—and better still as she goes along. We don't object to tennis players' or skaters' or jazz musicians' or ballet dancers' practicing incessantly, or to their knowing the technical names of the tools they use and how exactly to produce their formal, highly stylized actions. Why, then, should we let our old rebellions against admittedly outmoded disciplinary forms dominate us so that we call all practice and 21

memorizing and technical study "dull drill"—and throw it out? Surely children have as much right to gain proficiency in a most basic skill as they do in learning a sport. And certainly they have as great a need to know how the language works and to have an accurate, specific way of talking about what they and others have tried to do in their writing.

22 In fact, children need to understand the whole wonderful literary process, from the first struggle with an idea, a fantasy or a muddled bunch of "facts" to printing and publication and reading and criticizing and weaving new patterns of ideas out of ones that have become familiar. And it can be done.

23 What is different now, I believe, and what differentiates the best of modern teaching and learning from the best of the past is that we recognize the fact that learning is a social process in which every participant plays a crucial role. The teacher respects the child, knows where the class is headed and how her students will proceed. But at the same time the teacher, like every child in the class, is a participant in the learning that is taking place for each child and for all the children together.

24 This is the true beginning, I believe, and it depends on a mutuality of trust and respect between teacher and pupil and among all the pupils. It depends on a belief shared within and outside the school that what the student learns is valuable to herself and her whole society. Learning to write takes time and much effort, but it can be done. And the joy of writing well is that this skill, learned early, stays with you and continues to grow through the whole of your life.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Margaret Mead was an anthropologist. What qualifications, then, did she bring to an article about children and writing?
2. Who is Mead's audience? How can you tell?
3. What are the two tasks the author suggests will solve the problem?
4. Make a list of five examples or illustrations Mead uses to support her solution. What makes them valuable? What makes them effective?
5. What is the ratio of statement of the problem to statement of the solution in this essay?
6. How does Mead bring the pieces of her analysis together to conclude the essay?